

JOHN BULL'S NEIGHBOUR

IN HER TRUE LIGHT.

*BEING AN ANSWER TO SOME RECENT FRENCH
CRITICISMS.*

By A "BRUTAL SAXON."



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IN general we should not be over-scrupulous about niceties of phrases, when the matter in hand is a dunce to be gibbeted. Speak out ! or the person addressed may not understand you. He is to be hung ; then hang him by all means, but make no bow when you mean no obeisance, and eschew the droll delicacy of the clown in the play :—
“ Be so good, sir, as to rise and be put to death.”

POE'S “MARGINALIA.”

PREFACE.

My only apology for writing this book is this,—I am a
“Brutal Saxon.”

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JOHN BULL'S NEIGHBOUR IN HER TRUE LIGHT.

INTRODUCTION.

FOR a long time our dear and generous neighbours over the water have been delving and grubbing in verbal dust-heaps, in search of garbage to fling at "*ces bêtes Anglais.*" Perhaps there is nothing in this that need cause astonishment, for no one nowadays, except old ladies and weak-minded people, hopes to discover that unknown quantity in human composition—gratitude; but, nevertheless, one does occasionally expect to meet with something like respect. *Perfide Albion* has many sins, no doubt, lying at her door, and there are some pretty big blots on her escutcheon. She has also a goodly number of social ulcers that it would become her to use every endeavour to heal; but as a leading actress in the World's great drama, to say nothing of her having played—and played successfully, too—the rôle of the Destiny-maker of other nations, it is not unreasonable to think that she is deserving of a better fate in her tolerably respectable old age than to be pelted with verbal mud, especially when it is remembered by whom the mud is flung. But when did conspicuous success not engender virulent jealousy on the part of those who, being deficient in the tact and ability necessary to gain success themselves, display their smallness of mind by snapping and snarling like ill-bred puppy-dogs? It is more than probable that the French gentlemen who have lately been amusing themselves by scratching the pachydermatous hide of John Bull have but scant know-

ledge of two characters who figure in sacred history. Therefore, I would humbly and deferentially beg to direct their earnest attention to a little moral episode, having reference to these personages, who were known as Ananias and Sapphira. I think it is Mark Twain who is accredited with having once said of somebody, that he had such a sacred regard for truth that he never used it. The two historical persons alluded to would seem to have had the same regard, and it is sad to relate that owing to this they made a painfully sudden exit from the vale of tears. If this too true story were taken to heart more by Madame La France, it is safe to predict that the moral standard of her volatile and eccentric children would be considerably raised. At any rate, such statements as that put forth recently by M. Hector France, in *Va-nu-Pieds de Londres*, would scarcely have found their way into print. This gentleman, in a very wonderful book indeed, asserts, in sober seriousness, that there are a class of men in London who get their living by having their heads punched at the rate of from sixpence to eightpence per punch. We all know that it is necessary to go abroad to learn news of home; and M. France will possibly now have the kindness to tell us where and when these interesting people are to be found, and what their net earnings are per week? Having made this marvellous discovery in our midst, and of which we ourselves were entirely ignorant, the author proceeds in the same serious vein to state that he saw a Salvation Army Captain, after preaching eloquently, slip away from his companions and drink *half a pint of gin* at a public-house bar. It would add to the value of this statement if M. France told us where *he* was stationed when he saw the astounding spectacle. He is certainly gifted with a marvelously penetrating vision, even for a Frenchman; but I trust he will not feel hurt if I venture on the remark that the "half-pint of gin" is a *little* too much. This is topped, however, by the description of "a man and dog fight" which M. France saw at "Wapping." It is foolish to expect that Frenchmen who have so much to engage their attention in their own beloved country should know anything of the contemporary history of their neighbours—excepting what it pleases them to know. Otherwise, the

talented M. France might have remembered that not a decade ago a certain Mr. Greenwood contributed a very startling story, *à propos* of the same subject, to a London daily paper. The scene of the story was not laid in Wapping, however, but Hanley. But though the Mayor of Hanley and the Corporation, assisted by sundry policemen, several detectives, and by Mr. James Greenwood himself, used every endeavour to authenticate the story, no trace whatever of the scene of the novel combat could be discovered; and after long and earnest investigation the conclusion arrived at was, that a pork-chop supper had seriously disagreed with the distinguished journalist, and he had dreamed a dream. May I beg of M. France that in revising his book for a new edition he should remember the above well-authenticated fact?

However, as we, *i.e.*, *nous bêtes Anglais*, say, "What is bred in the bone won't come out." Therefore, it is perhaps a somewhat hopeless task to look for truth in the scribbling gentlemen who hail from the other side of the Channel. The word was long ago expurgated from their vocabulary, for they felt that while it remained they were too heavily handicapped.

Of course the gentle Gaul perversely closes his eyes to the possibility of the "Brutal Saxon" being in possession of any virtues. But, as we remember this, it naturally suggests to us the very foolish ostrich, who, when pursued by its enemies, buries its poor little head in the sand, thinking that thereby its whole body is hidden. So also, to use a simile, "Mossoo" imagines that by closing his eyes to the good qualities of his neighbours the world quite fails to detect his own numerous faults. If it were necessary to classify these faults, they might be arranged under the respective headings of (1) an utter disregard for the truth; (2) the most consummate vanity; (3) a repulsive immorality; (4) Godlessness; (5) faithlessness; (6) uncleanness, moral and physical. I am aware that these would, in the aggregate, form a very heavy indictment, but then the most voluminous evidence is at hand to amply substantiate it.

In venturing, in my capacity of a "Brutal Saxon," on the foregoing remarks, I do not forget the pretty story of the

pot and the kettle ; but nations, like individuals, while having many faults, may also be in possession of some virtues ; though, as viewed through the spectacles of our charming Gallic friends, *we* are utterly virtueless. It is terribly sad to reflect on this state of things, which, of course, must be true since Frenchmen tell us so. But, while bowing humbly to the charge, I intend, with John Bullish obstinacy, to bring forth into the light of publicity some of the little weaknesses and failings of our too kind neighbours. And in doing this, I shall endeavour to avoid exaggeration in the slightest degree. Nor must I forget to say that I am not unmindful that there are many ennobling characteristics which distinguish the French nation. In fact, I think I may go so far as to assert that, of all the nations of the earth, none have a higher appreciation of the French as a people than we unfortunate and brutal Saxons. But it may be as well to remind our neighbours that, as they live in a structure built of exceedingly transparent material, it might be more becoming if they displayed less readiness to throw stones.

CHAPTER I.

Anglophobia—Insult to Lord Lyons—The *Voltaire's* Short Memory—
Scene in the French Chamber—An English Criticism—French Republic
—Une Nation des Singes à Larynx de Perroquets.

EVERYBODY knows that there is a disease in France called *Anglophobia* ; that it is a little worse than hydrophobia, and just as incurable. It lies dormant for some time, and then breaks out with terrible virulence. This disease during the last two years has been epidemic across the water, and, from the *gamins* in the gutter to the President of the Great Republic, it has run a very violent course. During these two years, the writers in the French Press have worked themselves into a perfect frenzy about poor old John Bull ; and as French people, owing to their unbounded egotism, never read anything but French papers and French books, they have naturally come to believe all that has been written

about *les Anglais*. When one makes a strong statement, it is always well to be in a position to give indisputable proof in support of what is stated ; and so, as evidence of the frenzy mentioned, I will cite an ably-edited paper, over which M. Jules Ferry is said to exercise some influence, namely, the *Voltaire*, which, in its issue a few days ago, wrote thus about our Ambassador at Paris :—

“In reply to the letter in which Victor Hugo did Queen Victoria the honour of asking her to pardon O'Donnell, the English Ambassador addressed Victor Hugo as Monsieur le Sénateur. As regards the refusal of the pardon, that will be a matter for the Queen's children and grandchildren, and those of her beloved subjects. The future has functions of its own. As to the incivility—I was going to say the insult—of greeting Victor Hugo by the title of Senateur, I find it strong, albeit English. Why did not Lord Lyons, while he had the ambassadorial pen in hand, describe the *grand homme Français* as Monsieur l'Académicien, since Victor Hugo is quite as much an Académicien as a Senateur? It is probable, however, that when he wrote to the Queen, Victor Hugo did not call her *cher confrère*, but addressed her as ‘Majesty.’ To describe Victor Hugo as M. le Sénateur is a blunder. It is possible that in England the title of Baronet is more highly prized than that of Poet, but in France it is quite the contrary. If Lord Lyons was selected as Ambassador to Paris, it was solely because he had read the works of Victor Hugo, because he was capable of seeing the difference between that immortal man and a mere Senateur. If it were not so, the choice of Lord Lyons would have no *raison d'être*, and any one not able to read would represent England just as well.”

If I refer to the above as silly impertinence, I shall use a term far too mild. It is almost too strong for the coarse-mouthed gentleman who presides over the fortunes of the villanous production known as *La Lanterne*; but it did *not* appear in Henri Rochefort's paper, but a Ministerial organ. The time has been when such a dastardly insult as this to England's Ambassador would have led to a diplomatic correspondence, and perhaps something more. But we live in a Radical age, and are ruled by Radical Ministers, who have the interests of every country but their own at

heart. He must be a dullard indeed who does not know that Lord Lyons has been a true friend to France; and he has rendered himself conspicuous for his uprightness, his chivalric bearing, and splendid hospitality. I trust that there are still some Frenchmen who will blush for the *Voltaire* when they remember the historical fact that when the armies of Bazaine and Macmahon were led into captivity in Germany, the British Government consented, through the kindly offices of *Her Majesty's Ambassador*, to advance to the French officers confined in German towns and fortresses the sum of money adequate to make up their pay to what it would have been had they been quartered in France.

"Her Majesty's Ambassador" who performed this kindly act was Lord Lyons, upon whom M. Jules Ferry's journal now heaps its envenomed abuse. The *grand homme Français*, of whom France is justly proud, has no other title than that of M. le Sénateur, and although France may worship him, all the world does not do so. He has written some splendid and stirring verses, some equally stirring dramas, and a good deal of questionable prose. But the vanity peculiar to his countrymen is somewhat stronger in him than in some of his compatriots, and nothing save his extreme age could justify his impertinence in writing to the Queen of a great country like England on behalf of a vulgar assassin, who, after a long and exhaustive trial, was justly condemned to death. Of course the impertinence of M. le Sénateur was not likely to be noticed by the *Voltaire*; but, unfortunately for themselves, the memories of Frenchmen are singularly short when anything against themselves has to be remembered. Otherwise, the writer in the *Voltaire*, before venturing to insult Lord Lyons in such a base and cowardly manner, would have allowed his mind to travel back for a period under a year, when Prince Krapotkine was condemned to a long imprisonment at Lyons. Possibly the *Voltaire* does not care to remember that at that time a petition was sent to the French Government by a large number of some of the most distinguished literary men in England, including, I believe, our own splendid poet Alfred Tennyson, compared with whom Victor Hugo sinks into insignificance. Will the *Voltaire* kindly tax its memory in

order that it may call to mind the howl that was raised in the French Press against the persons whose names were appended to that very generous petition,—how they were insolently told to “mind their own business, and not interfere in the affairs of a neighbouring State”? Now it must not be forgotten that these petitioners were not pleading for leniency to be shown to a vulgar, brutal assassin, but to a highly-educated, distinguished, and conspicuously clever, if mistaken, man. But French Chauvinism was touched, and the English gentlemen who out of the generosity of their hearts pleaded for mercy on behalf of a misguided Prince were abused in pot-house fashion by some of the ablest of French writers. It is not out of place to recall at this moment the remark of the late M. Thiers, before he himself had become touched with the taint of Republicanism :—“ *La république est destinée toujours à finir par l'imbécillité ou dans le sang.*”

Will any body who has followed France in her movements during the last two or three years deny that the imbecility stage has been reached? and one is led to fear that the blood is not far off. Does not the following paragraph, cut from *Le France*, on the occasion of the departure of the Marquis Tseng for Folkestone, after the fall of Sontay, read very much like the emanation of imbeciles?—“ *The Marquis Tseng has had to go.* He could no longer remain in Paris. In a week's time he will want his passports. Until then he keeps quiet; and quite right, too. *Compliments of the season to M. le Marquis !*”

Again, will any one deny that the scene in the French Chamber on Saturday, December 29, 1883, had not a close resemblance to a meeting of imbeciles? M. Ferry, in order to persuade the Chamber to renounce that prerogative of the exclusive initiative in financial matters which M. Gambetta always contended was indisputably prescribed by the constitution, and to accept for this once the restitution by the Senate of the funds for clerical scholarships, and of the 30,000 francs which, a fortnight previously, had been struck off the salary of the Archbishop of Paris, promised only to give the scholarships to existing students and to support a revision of the Constitution next year. Certain persons on the Extreme Left were ill-bred enough to openly express

their want of faith in M. Ferry's promises. Whereupon the President, exasperated by these doubts, turned to that part of the Chamber, and said :—" I am speaking to those who honestly want a revision, not to those who clamour for it in the hope that it will be refused."

This remark led to a scene that defies all attempts to adequately depict. In a voice of thunder M. George Perin roared, " Explain yourself. Whom are you addressing ? " " No one here," answered the President. M. Tony Révillon then shouted, " Whom else can it be ? " While other members, springing to their feet and gesticulating like madmen, cried, " We are tired of being insulted." For some time the uproar was so great that no words could be heard, only one great horrible roar of hoarse voices. At length M. Ferry was understood to say, " I have nothing to retract." This was too much for M. Clovis Hugués, who, standing on his seat and wildly beating the air with his arms, roared, " You are an insolent fellow." A tumult followed this, and these worthy, *highly-civilised* gentlemen of the First Nation of the Earth (*sic*) seemed as if they were going to fly at each other's throats. Messieurs les Sénateurs, if you were not guilty of imbecility on the occasion here alluded to, then I must confess to having no knowledge of the meaning of the word. Surely the shade of M. Thiers must have looked down on the disgraceful scene and smiled, as he saw how true his prediction had come. But, as an English Liberal newspaper* said the other day :—

" The French Republic is more arrogant, more violent, more aggressive, more energetic in demanding from the weak what the strong should never ask, than any empire or kingdom in the world. Democracy, we see now, can be as wicked as emperors and kings, whatever the Democratic Federation may say. The demand upon China for money is ridiculously tyrannical. But it is nothing like the demand upon Madagascar for the cost of the destruction of the Sakalava seaboard. The latter is barbarously cruel, and represents France in the very worst light."

Distinguished Frenchmen themselves have not hesitated

* *Eastern Morning News.*

to freely lash their countrymen, and never have their national weaknesses been more forcibly expressed than they were by the celebrated Abbé Sieyès, a French politician and publicist, and at one time Ambassador to Berlin.* In a letter to Mirabeau, he spoke of the French as "*Une nation de singes à larynx de perroquets.*" This, however, was but a paraphrase of Voltaire's celebrated remark in a letter which he addressed to Madame du Deffand, November 21, 1766:—"Your nation is divided into two species: the one of idle monkeys, who mock at everything; and the other of tigers, who tear." Nothing that any foreigner has ever written against France has been so terribly stinging and bitter as this,—all the more stinging on account of its tremendous truth. Any one who knows Paris at the present day will not need to be told that the idle monkeys are very conspicuous; while the tigers are lying *perdu*, thirsting for blood, and panting for the moment when they can commence again to tear and rend.

Some recent returns state that there are about 250,000 persons in Paris who have no visible means of obtaining a livelihood. These figures represent an extraordinary percentage, when it is remembered that the population of the French capital is only a little more than 2,000,000. And these 250,000 blackguards—male and female—hide their shameless heads in the dens and rookeries, the equal of which the worst parts of London cannot show. Eugène Sue's "Mysteries of Paris" is as applicable now as it was when it was first written. It is true Paris has been extensively "Haussmannised," and during the Second Empire a great deal more guilt was added to the city; but the rookeries and the horrors remain, even though they have been edged closer together. In the lurid year of 1870, as all the world knows, the tigers came forth to take part in and gloat over the carnage and senseless and idiotic destruction. If hell had poured forth its worst fiends, they could not have been more horrible, more cruel, more inhuman,

* Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, known as the Abbé Sieyès, was born at Fréjus, May, 1748. He was Vicar-General and Chancellor of Chartres, and a member of the States-General of the National Assembly of the Convention, of the Council of Five Hundred. He lived in exile from 1815 to 1830, and died at Paris 1836.

more devilish, than were those devilish people. The hideous cruelty of the women and the insensate fury of the men could not be adequately described.

If MM. Jules Vallés and A. Lançon, who have just published a book entitled "*La Rue à Londres*,"* instead of crossing the Channel to lay bare the ulcers of the World's City, had only dived into their own reeking and repulsive slums, they would have got more startling subjects for their clever pen and pencil than the greatest city in the world, with its population of nearly 5,000,000, could possibly furnish them with. But here again the Chauvinism asserts itself. The Anglophobia is running its course in Paris, and so these two gentlemen—clever writer and clever artist—cross to London, and, shutting their eyes to its unequalled grandeur and magnificence, dive into its worst slums, and, dragging to light festering evils, give them pictorial and verbal images. Then they return to Paris triumphantly, and say to their countrymen: "Behold these English beasts; these are *true* types of our neighbours."

In this same book, "*La Rue à Londres*," we are told that we do not know what comfort is. Oh, Messieurs, Messieurs, why, when you wrote that, did you not bear in mind the terrible fate of Ananias and his wife? It was unworthy of such clever men as you to put such a shameless falsehood into print for the sake of pandering to the Anglophobic tastes of your countrymen. It was my proud privilege to once hear your late lamented and distinguished *confrère*, Gustave Doré, say that no other people on the face of the earth knew what *home* was as the English know it. I should like to ask you, MM. Jules Vallés and A. Lançon, if *you* know what comfort is? That is, when I say you, I mean, of course, your country. If so, who taught it to you? Try for once and overcome that national trait of which I have spoken, and honestly confess that we brutal Saxons gave you the lessons. I intend, however, in the course of this work, to depict some of your own home-

* Charpentier et Cie. Price 100 francs. This work is splendidly got up, and in an artistic and typographical sense is the most magnificent volume that has been issued in Paris for years. Its great price, however, will prevent its being generally read.

life such as I understand it after long residence amongst you. And I shall defy you to contradict my statement, that of all the nations of the earth the French are the least versed in the art of making their homes comfortable. M. Jules Vallés further informs us in his work that we are a nation of "gloomy, melancholy hypocrites." This is a very typical sample of the real French politeness—a subject I deal with further on. For nine years this gentleman was an exile in our midst, and, amongst his compatriots in the neighbourhood of Le-ces-ter-square, managed to pass away the time pretty pleasantly. But, while partaking of our hospitality for these nine years, he was unable to discover anything more startling about us than that we are gloomy, melancholy hypocrites. I find, according to the best dictionary authorities, that a hypocrite is "one who assumes an appearance of virtue and piety." Now, it has generally been understood by the rest of the world that French people were peculiarly liable to this assumption, so possibly M. Vallés has made a mistake. But, whether or no, we will do our best to survive the terrible verdict. In dealing with us, however, he is mild—possibly in return for our nine years' hospitality—-as compared to what he is with his own countrymen. M. Jules Vallés happens to be the editor and proprietor of a journal called *Le Cri du Peuple*, and these are some of the terms he applied to the students of the Latin Quartier the other day. He charges them with "cynicism, imbecility, corruption, debauchery, empty-headedness, and general rottenness." M. Vallés was a student himself once, and the young men of whom he now speaks in so feeling a manner will by-and-by take their places as French citizens. They will go to the Senate, the Church, the Bar; they will paint pictures and write books; so that young France now knows the class of men who will lead it later on. Possibly M. Vallés has again made a mistake, and he meant these pretty epithets for the present rulers of his country, and not for the poor students. Under any circumstances, it would appear as if the "tiger" was very ferocious indeed in M. Jules Vallés; and it is safe to assert, looking at the class of paper he now edits, and to the fact that he found it necessary to retire into obscurity for nine years, that should the late M. Thiers' prediction

be again fully realised, and the blood stage be reached, M. Vallés' fangs would drip pretty freely.

In addition to the figures I have already quoted of the blackguardism in Paris must be added 151,000 indigents. I give this number from the recent articles of M. d'Haussonville. Now, for every 2,000,000 of population in London, we have only 125,000 indigents. The same authority also states that "Paris misery is stationary ; while London misery has been reduced in thirty years from *six to three per cent.*" What do you think of that, gentlemen? Now, if to your 250,000 blackguards and 151,000 indigents we add your 100,000 prostitutes, we get a startling total, in very truth ; such as ought to make you seriously reflect whether, after all, your pen and pencil might not be more profitably employed at home in revealing to an astonished world the rottenness of your "Horrible Paris." We are fully aware of the mote in our own eye, and, according to the lights that are given us, we will use our best endeavours to clean out our Augean stable ; but pray, good gentlemen, do not forget your own.

CHAPTER II.

Horrible Paris—St. Denis—Rue des Cascades—Ménilmontant—*Le Cri du Peuple* and the Students—An English Writer on Paris.

SO much has been made of "Horrible London" by French writers recently, that one can scarcely help a certain satisfaction that there is a Horrible Paris. Not the Paris of the Boulevards, with their gilt and gaud, and which most Englishmen only know ; but the greater Paris, lying to the north and south, east and west. Suppose we select the region of St. Denis, one of the most dreadful in Paris. Here the houses are six and seven storeys in height. They are narrow, dark, reeking, incomprehensibly filthy. The average rent for one room is two and a half francs a week, and in many of these rooms are huddled six, seven, and eight human beings. Sisters and brothers, fathers and daughters sleep together. Young men and young women shamelessly expose their nakedness to each other. There

are absolutely no sanitary regulations. The old cry of *Garde à vous!* may be heard at any hour of the evening by any one who has the boldness to penetrate into this vile quarter. In the dark, rotting staircases are open privies, from which the filth is seldom removed. The floors of the rooms are black with trodden-in nastiness. The walls reek with mildew and festering damp. The air of these places is absolutely overpowering. In the streets, heaps of offal collect and are the debating-ground for thousands of rats and gaunt, starving dogs and cats, who rend and tear each other, and dispute the mouldering garbage. In hot weather this quarter is the birthplace of cholera, typhoid, typhus, and almost every disease under the sun. In cold and wet weather, the misery is appalling. The people who eke out their poisonous existence here are human ghouls. The women, by dissipation, are bloated out of all semblance to womanhood; while the men are hideous in their skulking, hang-dog, villanous expressions. The children grow old long before their time; they are utterly without any sense of decency, morality, or religion. They are born like dogs, and they die and are buried like dogs. Suicides are of every-day occurrence, and murders are frequent.

Passing from St. Denis to Belleville, we find precisely the same thing, though, if anything, worse. And lest it might be thought that I am drawing an exaggerated picture, I will quote the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, who, in the issue of that paper for December 26, 1883, says about these very places I allude to:—

“St. Denis is a suburban Alsatia of want. Misery shifts just as fashion shifts. St. Antoine is now nothing to Belleville, and Belleville is rapidly yielding to St. Denis. There is the new misery and the old misery; the old misery in some of the central arrondissements is almost genteel; the people are ashamed to be seen to suffer, they dress decently, and hide the eleemosynary morsel in their sleeve. Belleville and St. Denis have no scruples of the kind; it is all squalor there, and no man dreads the eye of his neighbours. The houses, both of the old misery and of the new, are simply awful; the former affront the sky with their six and seven storeys of narrow and dark and dirty homes; the latter, as in the Rue des Cascades and at Ménil-

montant, are often mere huts built on the spongy soil. The lowest rent here is two and a half francs a week for one room. In the older quarters nothing is to be had much under two hundred and fifty francs, or ten pounds, a year, and that no more than a kitchen, or a room under the roof. At Ménilmontant, as we see, it hardly exceeds five pounds a year, but this is absolutely the worst accommodation in Paris, if not in the world. Only the lowest and most destitute wretches lodge at this rate; they pay in advance, and are, consequently, under no obligation to have furniture to secure the rent. They often move in with nothing but a truss of straw. The yield for the landlord is at least twenty-five per cent. Such buildings are generally found in what the French call *cités*, often streets with only one opening. They are shut out from the world, and their population, half rag-pickers and half thieves, live and die there. The vice, owing to the overcrowding, is inconceivably revolting; there are cases in which all the restraints of what we like to consider as a very law of nature in decency are set at nought. Whole families live in absolute promiscuity. The walls are often covered with vile drawings, and the rooms are in a state of indescribable ruin, their floorboards and doors are often torn away for firewood, and the pattern of the wall-paper obliterated with the accumulation of every kind of filth. *Of forty-six thousand odd lodgings like this in Paris, eighteen thousand odd were let for less than a hundred francs (£4) a year, twenty-four thousand at from one to two hundred, six thousand at from two hundred to three hundred.* Three thousand were entirely without any heating apparatus whatever, chimney or stove; five thousand were lit only by a small skylight; and fifteen hundred took their light and air from a passage or corridor. No wonder that, while only fifteen per thousand die in the neighbourhood of the Elysée, thirty-five per thousand die in such quarters as these."

Have we anything in our great and grand London that can compare with this for ghastly horror? Nor must it be supposed that the above-mentioned districts are the only ones of their kind in Paris. They are, perhaps, the worst; but there are others nearly as bad. Look at the Mouffetard district, for instance, and the awful rookeries

of the Plain of Clichy and Saint Ouen, where the repulsive *chiffonniers* drag out their existence. Nor must we forget the squalid neighbourhoods round Notre Dame; or the nest of rookeries lying behind the Jardin des Plantes; or those that abut on the Boulevard St. Germain and St. Michel, or the Avenue des Gobelins. Paris, in fact, is a city of shams and frauds, of rottenness and gimcrackery. The foreigner goes on to the Boulevards and stares into the gaily-dressed shop windows. But let him confine himself strictly to the Boulevards, otherwise, if he be a man of taste, he will be disgusted. What, for instance, can be said of the Avenue de l'Opéra, that cost many millions of francs to build? Here, amongst the grand shops, are hideously ugly protruding stalls, with their heaps of cheap trash. Is there any other city in the world that could show such an incongruity? A recent writer,* speaking of Paris, thus criticises it:—

“Each house is exactly the same height as the next, the windows are of the same pattern, the wooden outer blinds the same shape, the line of the level roof runs along straight and unbroken, the chimneys are either invisible or insignificant. Nothing projects, no bow-window, balcony, or gable; the surface is as flat as well can be. From parapet to pavement the wall descends plumb, and the glance slips along it unchecked. Each house is exactly the same colour as the next, white; the wooden outer blinds are all the same colour, a dull grey; in the windows there are no visible red, or green, or tapestry curtains, mere sashes. There are no flowers in the windows to catch the sunlight. The upper storeys have the air of being uninhabited, as the windows have no curtains whatever, and the wooden blinds are frequently closed. Two flat vertical surfaces, one on each side of the street, each white and grey, extend onwards and approach in mathematical ratio. That is a Parisian street. Turning round a corner one comes suddenly on a pillar of a dingy, dull hue, whose outline bulges unpleasantly. In London you would shrug your shoulders, mutter ‘hideous,’ and pass on. This is the famous Vendôme Column. As for the

* Richard Jefferies in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Column of July, it is so insignificant, so silly (no other word expresses it so well), that a second glance is carefully avoided. The Hôtel de Ville, a vast white building, is past description, it is so plain and so repellant in its naked glaring assertion. From about old Notre Dame they have removed every mediæval outwork which had grown up around and rendered it lifelike; it now rises perpendicular and abrupt from the white surface of the square. Unless you had been told that it was the Notre Dame of Victor Hugo, you would not look at its exterior twice. The barrack-like Hôtel des Invalides, the tomb of Napoleon—was ever a tomb so miserably lacking in all that should inspire a reverential feeling? The marble tub in which the urn is sunk, the gilded chapel, and the yellow windows, could anything be more artificial and less appropriate? They jar on the senses, they insult the torn flags which were carried by the veterans at Austerlitz, and which now droop, never again to be unfurled to the wind of battle. The tiny Seine might as well flow in a tunnel, being bridged so much. There remains but the Arc de Triomphe, the only piece of architecture in all modern Paris worth a second look. Even this is spoiled by the same intolerable artificiality. The ridiculous sculpture on the face, the figures blowing trumpets, and, above all, the group on the summit, which is quite beyond the tongue of man to describe, so utterly hideous is it, destroy the noble lines of the arch, if any one is so imprudent as to approach near it. For the most part, the vaunted Boulevards are but planted with planes, the least pleasing of trees, whose leaves present an unvarying green, till they drop a dead brown; and the horse-chestnuts in the Champs Elysées are set in straight lines, to repeat the geometry of the streets. Thus, central Paris has no character. It is without individuality, and expressionless. Suppose you said—‘The human face is really very irregular; it requires shaping. This nose projects; here, let us flatten it to the level of the cheek. This mouth curves at the corners; let us cut it straight. These eyebrows arch; make them straight. This colour is too flesh-like; bring white paint. Besides, the features move, they laugh, they assume sadness; this is wrong. Here, divide the muscles, that

they may henceforth remain in unvarying rigidity.' That is what has been done to Paris. It is made straight, it is idealised after Euclid, it is stiff, wearisome, and feeble. Lastly, it has no expression."

The foregoing is neither a prejudiced nor exaggerated aspect of this much-vaunted Paris ; it is absolutely and indisputably true.

CHAPTER III.

English and French Heroism contrasted—Some Historical Reminiscences—Crécy—Poitiers—Agincourt—The Friends of the Revolution—The Imbecility of the Republic—Bismarck's Opinion of French Soldiers.

IN the recent work, *John Bull et Son Ile*, the author says that, as a nation, we are wanting in heroism. This is certainly a very unfortunate statement for a Frenchman to make, for it instantly conjures up to the Englishman an endless array of historical events upon which the world has long since passed its verdict ; and that verdict has pronounced the English race, individually and collectively, one of the most heroic nations of the earth. With Sedan and Metz fresh in his memory, Mr. Max O'Rell should have hesitated before venturing to bring such a serious charge against his neighbours. Can he ever have heard, for instance, of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 ? If so, will he deny that during that awful period we showed such heroism, both as a nation and individuals, that it alone might fairly entitle us to rank as a heroic people ? But, possibly, Mr. O'Rell does not read history, not even that appertaining to his own country. Otherwise, he would have known that in work of exploration—in the ghastly, frozen North—in burning, equatorial Africa—in every region of the earth—Englishmen have always been in the van. He should also know that amongst a very long list of ancestors whom we are pleased to think were essentially heroic, there are three for whom we brutal Saxons have an especial veneration. They are Sir Francis Drake, Lord Nelson, and the Duke of Wellington. Of these two latter

Frenchmen surely cannot be unmindful. Will Mr. O'Rell deny that we displayed heroism during the Peninsular War? It is a somewhat remarkable circumstance, that in all our struggles with France we have always crushed France; and it has been generally admitted by impartial historians that the sacrifices we were called upon as a nation to make during these struggles have fairly entitled us to the bays for heroism and valour. I am quite aware that WATERLOO has an ugly sound to Frenchmen's ears; and, when uttered in their presence, it causes the fever of Anglophobia to rage with burning intensity. It is, therefore, with considerable reluctance I mention it; nor would I do so, save that I feel impelled to it by a stern sense of duty. And I put Mr. O'Rell upon his honour now—French honour is a *bric-à-brac* thing, we know; but it cannot be helped,—and I ask him solemnly, whether Waterloo was not the crowning of a long series of heroic deeds such as any nation might envy? But, I may venture to go back very much farther than Waterloo, and mention another name that is equally objectionable to Frenchmen—*Crécy*. Was not that glorious passage of arms also the culmination of a campaign that has added lustre to the English flag? And, coming a little farther along on the Road of Time, we reach *Poitiers*. Perhaps Mr. O'Rell will, in time, recover from the shock it will have upon him to be told that at Poitiers our Edward the Black Prince, with only 8,000 men, opposed himself to Mr. O'Rell's countrymen, who were in force as eight to one, and, smiting them hip and thigh, routed and all but annihilated them. But—and I mention this with, as I hope, becoming modesty—the crowning act of that great fight even put into the shade the valour of England's soldiers; and I venture to believe that my good friend Mr. O'Rell will admit that it *was* heroic when the Black Prince, flushed and excited with victory, received his prisoner foe—the King of France—with every mark of distinguished honour, even waiting upon him *in propria personâ* at table,—an honour and courtesy that were not relaxed when the captive king was conveyed to England and lodged in the Palace of the Savoy in London. Now, do, my dear and gifted O'Rell, just blush ever so little as

you read this, for it will serve to show that you really are sorry for having been so sparing of the truth. Perhaps, as I am citing evidence against your charge, I may as well mention *Agincourt*, which we Saxons are not a little proud of. And, coming to our own time, I would respectfully request to be allowed to put *en evidence* our wars against the Sikhs, one of the most powerful races of fighting men on the earth. Mooltan is a name which thrills an Englishman. Mooltan was besieged by English troops under the command of General Whish, the enemy being under Moolraj Dewan. During the siege a great powder magazine, which contained 16,000 lb. of powder within the fort, blew up, killing about 800 men, and shattering most of the principal houses. As showing the force of the explosion, it may be stated that bottles were knocked off tables at a distance of two miles away. No better illustration of the desperate courage of the Sikhs can be afforded than their conduct on this occasion. Instead of being disheartened at their loss, the Moolraj sent word that he had still enough powder and shot to last for twelve months, and that he would hold out as long as a single stone of the fort would stand. The British General sent a summons to him to surrender, which, writes one of the British soldiers, "he quietly rammed down his longest gun and fired back at us." Among the gallant soldiers who fell was Lieut.-Colonel Wm. Havelock, whilst leading a body of 450 horse against 15,000 of the enemy. The Colonel led the first and second squadrons at a gallop, dashing through the whole of the Sikh army, and sabring hundreds of the Sikhs under the most frightful shower of missiles from their guns and matchlocks. A second charge was made, when the bullets fell among the troops like hail; Colonel Havelock's left leg and arm were cut off, and his right arm wounded, when he fell dead upon the field. Eleven of his men fought by his side until every one was destroyed. The war continued during 1849, and ended in the surrender of the whole of the Sikh army and the annexation of the Punjab to the British dominions.

And then, again, what about General Wheeler's defence of the sand-hills at Cawnpore; of Gordon Thomson and

his seven companions, who for hours held their own against legions of natives; of the brave Scully and Lieutenant Willoughby, who, together with seven others, kept thousands of their foes at bay, and then, when no longer able to defend it, blew up the tremendous magazine of Delhi, involving all in a common ruin; of the grand old man, General Have-lock and his handful of devoted men, during that awful march to relieve Lucknow?—But there, the list might be extended almost *ad infinitum*. I have said enough, though it is a moral certainty Mr. O'Rell and his compatriots will not be convinced.

And now I may fairly claim the right to inquire if France has ever particularly distinguished herself as a heroic nation? History itself answers in a stern and hoarse voice, and says—No.

It is not necessary to travel any farther back than the reign of your Charles IX. Have we anything in our history to compare with that ghastly and unheroic crime, the massacre of St. Bartholomew? Then, if we take your next king—Henry III.—once Duke of Anjou, do we not find his whole reign a shameless chapter of blood and debauchery? In fact, is not the whole Valois dynasty a pitiable story of hypocrisy, crime, and cowardice? From 1610 to 1643 have you anything better to show? All the events of that period of thirty-three years are still marked with crime, treachery, and craven deeds, and there is not a single gleam of heroism to relieve the horrible gloom. Pass we on now to your lurid years of Revolution. Does not the very utterance of the ghastly cry "*A la Lanterne!*" send back an echo of "no heroism, no heroism"?* Does not the following read like the distorted ravings of some maniac romance writer? and yet it is sober Alison, the historian, who writes it. It relates to the frightful atrocities perpetrated at Nantes by the human fiend Carrier:—

While Thureau was pursuing with varied success the system of extermination in La Vendée, the scaffold was erected at Nantes, and those infernal executions commenced which have affixed a stain upon the French Revolution unequalled since the beginning of the world.

* *A la Lanterne!* the cry of the brutal, bloodthirsty mob, as they hurried their victims to the street corners and hung them from the lamp brackets.

A revolutionary tribunal was formed there under the direction of Carrier, and it soon outstripped even the rapid progress of atrocity of Danton and Robespierre. "Their principle," says the Republican historian, "was that it was necessary to destroy *en masse* all the prisoners. At their command was formed a corps called the Legion of Marat, composed of the most determined and bloodthirsty of the revolutionists, the members of which were entitled of their own authority to incarcerate any person whom they chose. The number of their prisoners was soon between three and four thousand, and they divided among themselves all their property. Whenever a fresh supply of captives was wanted, the alarm was spread of a counter-revolution, the *générale* beat, the cannon planted; and this was immediately followed by numerous arrests. Nor were they long in disposing of the captives. The miserable wretches were either slain with poniards in the prisons, or carried out in a vessel and drowned by wholesale in the Loire. On one occasion a hundred 'fanatical priests,' as they are termed, were taken out together, stripped of their clothes, and precipitated into the waves. The same vessel served for many of these *noyautés*, and the horror expressed by many of the citizens for that mode of execution formed the ground for fresh arrests and increased murders. Women big with child, infants, eight, nine, and ten years old, were thrown together into the stream, on the sides of which men armed with sabres were placed to cut off their heads if the waves should throw them undrowned on the shore. The citizens, with loud shrieks, implored the lives of the little innocents, and numbers offered to adopt them as their own; but though a few were granted to their urgent entreaty, the greater part were doomed to destruction. Thus were consigned to the grave whole generations at once—the ornament of the present, the hope of the future. So immense were the numbers of those who were cut off by the guillotine or mowed down by fusillades, that three hundred men were occupied for six weeks in covering with earth the vast multitude of corpses which filled the trenches which had been cut in the Place of the Department at Nantes to receive the dead bodies. Ten thousand died of disease, pestilence, and horror in the prisons of that department

alone. On one occasion, by orders of Carrier, twenty-three of the Royalists, on another twenty-four, were guillotined together without any trial. The executioner remonstrated, but in vain. Among them were many children of seven or eight years of age and seven women ; the executioner died two or three days after with horror at what he himself had done. At another time one hundred and forty women, incarcerated as suspected, were drowned together, though actively engaged in making bandages and shirts for the Republican soldiers.

"So great was the multitude of captives who were brought in on all sides that the executioners, as well as the company of Marat, declared themselves exhausted with fatigue ; and a new method of disposing of them was adopted, borrowed from Nero, but improved on the plan of that tyrant. A hundred or a hundred and fifty victims, for the most part women and children, were crowded together in a boat with a concealed trap-door in the bottom, which was conducted into the middle of the Loire ; at a given signal the crew leapt into another boat, the bolts were withdrawn, and the shrieking victims precipitated into the waves, amidst the laughter of the company of Marat, who stood on the banks to cut down any who approached them. This was what Carrier called his Republican baptism. The Republican marriages were, if possible, a still greater refinement in cruelty. Two persons of different sexes, generally an old man and an old woman, or a young man and a young woman, bereft of every species of dress, were bound together, and after being left in that torture for half an hour were thrown into the river.

"The scenes in the prisons which preceded these horrid executions exceeded all that romance has figured of the terrible. Many women died of terror the moment a man entered their cells, conceiving that they were about to be led out to the *noyades* ; the floors were covered with the bodies of their infants, numbers of whom were yet quivering in the agonies of death. On one occasion, the inspector entered the prison to seek for a child where the evening before he had left above three hundred infants ; but they were all gone in the morning, having been drowned in the preceding night. To every representation of the citizens

in favour of these innocent victims, Carrier answered, 'They are all vipers, let them be stifled.' Three hundred young women of Nantes were drowned by him in one night ; so far from having had any share in political discussions, they were of the unfortunate class who live by the pleasures of others. Several hundred persons were thrown every night for some months into the river ; their shrieks at being led out of the *entrepôt*, on board the barques, wakened all the inhabitants of the town, and froze every heart with horror. Early in the *noyades*, Lamberty, at a party at Carrier's, pointing to the Loire, said, 'It has already passed two thousand eight hundred.' 'Yes,' said Carrier, 'they are in the national bath.' Fouquet boasted that he had dispatched nine thousand in other quarters on the same river. From Saumur to Nantes, a distance of sixty miles, the Loire was for several weeks red with human blood ; the ensanguined stream divided the blue waves of the deep. The multitude of corpses it bore to the ocean was so prodigious that the adjacent coast was strewn with them, and a violent west wind and high tide having brought part of them back to Nantes was followed by a train of sharks and marine animals of prey, attracted by so prodigious an accumulation of human bodies. They were thrown ashore in vast numbers. Fifteen thousand persons perished there, under the hands of the executioner, or of diseases in prison in one month ; the total victims of the Reign of Terror, at that place, exceeded 30,000."

Can a people with a hideous page in their history, such as that I have quoted, claim to be heroic ? Did France learn any lesson by those horrors ? Again history answers, No. We will hurry along and come to '48. Was there anything heroic during that time of horror ? Was there anything heroic at Sedan, at Metz ? Was there anything heroic in Frenchmen cowardly insulting the defenceless Empress, when the sun of the Second Empire had set in a sea of blood ? Was there anything heroic when, still later, the town of Marseilles endeavoured to wrest from the forlorn widow the gift they themselves had given her husband at a time when, with characteristic French fawning, they would have licked the dust from his shoes ? Was there anything heroic in scuttling away from Egypt, and leaving us to do

the fighting? Was it a heroic act to so basely insult your guest, the Spanish King? And did you display heroism when, the other day, in Tonkin, French sailors and marines barbarously and ruthlessly massacred three thousand helpless natives—butchered them in cold blood, *vide* China correspondent of Paris *Figaro*. And, lastly, have you shown a scintilla of heroism in the pitiable Madagascar affair? Has not your conduct there been a scandal and a burning disgrace? Little towns absolutely devoid of the slightest fortifications have been shelled, out of wanton and petty spite, and hundreds of defenceless and unarmed natives have been cruelly slaughtered.

In all the incidents I have mentioned the tiger has been conspicuous, and to-morrow, or the next day, or the day after that, its fangs will be again dripping with gore.* History is a terrible denouncer, and in the eyes of the civilised world it indelibly brands the French people as the most brutal and bloodthirsty when aroused,—the most arrogant and despotic on the face of the earth. It is historically recorded of Prince Bismarck, that he remarked, when referring to the bloodthirsty brutality of French soldiers, *Zieht man einem solchen Gallier die weisse Haut ab, so hat man einen Turco vor sich.*†

* On Sunday, January 13 of the present year, a meeting of 4,000 unemployed workmen and many women was held in the *Salle Lévis* at Paris. Speeches of a most violent and inflammatory character were delivered, and all the speakers declared that "an armed revolution" was the sole remedy for their grievances. When the speeches were over, the horrible *Carmagnole* was danced by a hundred couples.—*Vide Paris Press*, January 14.

† Trans.—Strip off the white skin of the Gaul and you will find a Turco.

CHAPTER IV.

A Challenge to M. Hector France—*La Femme des Rats*—A Bullfight at Aix-en-Provence—Les Sculptres Vivants—Bal Bullier in Paris—The Can-can—How Young France takes its Pleasure.

IN the extraordinary work *Va-nu-Pieds de Londres*, which has been referred to once or twice in the preceding pages, the author states that he witnessed in London (1) a man-and-dog fight at Wapping; (2) a fight between two women stripped, and fought according to rules that had been drawn up. The book in which these two statements appear is a *réchauffage* of a series of articles this enterprising journalist, who actually ventured across the Channel in search of the wonderful, contributed to a Paris paper. In their newspaper form they could well be allowed to pass unnoticed, but since M. Hector France has given them a more enduring place, I publicly challenge him to produce some distinct proof that his statements are true. In what part of Wapping did the man-and-dog fight take place? and where did the fight between the women come off?

I await M. France's answer.

In order to gain some idea of the value that may be attached to this gentleman's book, it is only necessary to read the conversation which he says he held with an "undertaker" in the Metropolis. The undertaker's name is "Joyce," and the author gravely informs his readers that Joyce in English *signifies joy*.

Oh! M. France, M. France, what a pitfall you dug for yourself when you ventured on that unhappy translation. With a little more authenticity than marks M. France's statements I will now call attention to some of the elevating spectacles which "Paris the Beautiful" offers to its inhabitants and foreigners alike. Here is one as described by a correspondent of the *Daily News*.*

"I read with much interest your review on M. France's

* Mr. E. A. B. Ball. *Daily News*, Dec. 27, 1883.

remarkable satire on English manners and customs of the present day. The sole object of the book apparently is to expose the innate ferocity and brutality of 'Ces bêtes Anglaises.' Keeping this purpose steadily in view, M. France no doubt congratulates himself at having been able to assist at, in company with the lowest riff-raff (*va-nu-pied*) of the London streets, those highly-sensational exhibitions of a 'man-and-dog fight' and an Amazonian encounter between an Irish and an English harridan. This exhibition is undoubtedly revolting and degrading—what Mr. Mantalini would have called 'a demmed unpleasant spectacle,'—but what shall we say of an entertainment which was one of the chief attractions of the grand fête at the Tuileries last September, in aid of the victims of the Ischia disaster, compared to which the Amazonian combat, which M. France execrates so strongly, was almost a refined and elevating spectacle? This entertainment, which, judging from the attendance, was one of the most successful in the whole fête, had for its *pièce de resistance* a wrestling match between a young fellow of 25 and a girl of about 20 or 21, but apparently younger. Wrestling, of course, it could hardly be called, and a Cornishman or North-countryman would have laughed the thing to scorn; but that did not lessen, but, if anything, rather increased, its indecency. The encounter, which lasted five or six minutes, was a confused struggle, the two wrestlers hugging, grappling, and tumbling about in every conceivable posture, and this was varied occasionally by the girl being thrown to the ground and almost literally biting the dust. I must admit that the male wrestler did his best not to hurt his fair antagonist, and in the end she came off victorious, as was no doubt arranged beforehand. Yet, in order to keep up the delusion, the woman got considerably marked, and even apparently hurt once or twice. The spectators were composed for the most part, not of the off-scourings of the London slums, as was the case in the remarkable combat related by M. France, but of the respectable bourgeois class with their wives and families, with a sprinkling of a few of higher rank. On reading, then, this violent tirade of M. France against English brutality, one is inclined to remind him of the English proverb, of which there is doubtless a

French equivalent, that 'Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.'"

The writer of the foregoing is perhaps not aware that the exhibition of a sham wrestling match between a man and woman is common all over France at country fairs; and often in out-of-the-way places the woman is half naked, in order to add a zest to the refining exhibition.

It happened that quite a few years ago I was lodging in the Avenue des Gobelins, in the house of a Professor at the Lycée. One evening my landlord said if I liked to accompany him he would take me to a very interesting entertainment. I did like; and so we made our way into the Boulevard d'Italie, and from thence to a small street running off it, where we entered a *buvette*. After passing through a very dirty room, where a number of hideously ugly, half-drunken, and half-naked girls were seated playing cards and dominoes, we found ourselves in a yard that was roofed over with a canvas awning. In the centre of the yard was a ring formed by boards about three feet high. The floor of the ring was covered with a layer of sawdust. Every inch of ground outside of the ring was filled with a drunken, leering crowd of men and women, with frightful and repulsive countenances. Several of the women had young children in their arms, and sips of absinthe, and what the French call *cau-de-vie*, were frequently given to these infants. The air of the place was thick with foul tobacco smoke, and reeked with effluvia arising from this unwashed crowd; while the babble of their voices was deafening, their conversation for the most part being coarse, lewd, and blasphemous. Up to this moment I had not the remotest idea what I had come to see; but I was soon to learn. A humpbacked man with a bloated face suddenly called out, "*Attention, Messieurs et Mesdames! La Femme des Rats.*" At the same moment a tall, herculean woman entered the sawdust ring from a doorway in the wall of the yard. At the first glance I thought she was a man in disguise, for she had a coarse, masculine type of face, that was scarred all over, and about her mouth was a thin growth of scraggy hair. The glaring oil-lamps enabled me, however, to discover that she was unmistakably of the female sex.

She was dressed in flesh-coloured stockings, and wore

high-heeled shoes. A loose, flowing petticoat of grey flannel came down to her knees, and the upper part of her body was clothed in a loosely-fitting bodice without sleeves; so that, save for tanned leather gloves coming up to the elbows, her arms were bare to the shoulders, the armpits and the breast being visible. Round her waist she had a broad "Champion belt," with a massive silver, or imitation silver, buckle, while pinned to her breast were three or four medals. She brought into the ring with her a large wire cage, containing a dozen big and ferocious-looking rats. This cage she deposited on the floor, and then addressing the audience, described herself as the champion rat-killer of the world. She said that the half-franc we had paid to come in went for the good of the house, and therefore she hoped that, when her performance was over, we should be liberal in our givings.

"Her performance" consisted in killing the dozen rats *with her teeth* in ten minutes, as timed by the humpbacked man, who was the landlord, or possibly "her agent."

The conditions were, "La Femme des Rats" was not to touch the vermin with her hands, but going down on all fours she was to seize them with her teeth as they issued from the small doorway of the cage.

The humpbacked man opened the door of the cage by means of a hooked stick, and instantly "La Femme des Rats" dropped on to all fours. In a few moments a big rat ventured to come forth from the cage, and with a quick, sudden, agile movement, evidently the result of long practice, the woman dashed at it, seized the animal with her powerful teeth, then shook it off as would a terrier, and it lay writhing in the agonies of death in the sawdust. The cheering of the brutal and excited audience evidently frightened the rats, so that they huddled in a mass in one corner of the cage, and it became necessary for the humpbacked man to poke them out with his stick. The second that ventured to come out was seized and killed instantly. Then two came out together. One was seized and disabled, and the other for the moment escaped, though the boards were too high to enable it to get out of the ring. The cage was now lifted up by the hooked stick, and the rest of the rats shaken out. Then, with all the snaps and snarls and

movements of a dog, the woman darted at the terrified animals, many of which flew at the bare parts of her arms and at her face, inflicting wounds from which the blood streamed. I sickened with horror at the revolting sight, for anything more hideously indecent it had never been my lot to behold. With half a minute to spare the creature accomplished her disgusting task, and every one of the twelve rats was stretched in the sawdust. Then, panting, bleeding, covered with dust and sawdust, the woman rose, and the drunken, brutal crowd cheered and shouted themselves hoarse. When "La Femme des Rats" had somewhat recovered her breath, she handed round a little tin plate, and collected about ten francs.

The "entertainment" I have here described did not take place, remember, amongst the brutal Saxons, but in the midst of the gentle Gauls; and I think I may venture to remark that all the brutality is not *quite* on our side. But here is another picture :—

A little more than a year ago a bull-fight was advertised to take place at Aix-en-Provence, eighteen miles from Marseilles. The entertainment was under the patronage and presence of the Mayor and Municipal Council. It was a fête-day, and a tremendous crowd of men, women, and children assembled to witness the edifying and refining spectacle. The man who opposed himself to the animal was an old, grey-headed Frenchman, and after he had gored and tortured the animal into fury, it made a furious onslaught upon him, and nearly trampled him to death. The Mayor hereupon rose in his seat, and ordered the exhibition to be stopped; but the gentle, lamb-like Gauls had come to enjoy themselves, and what mattered it though an old, grey-haired man was butchered to make them a holiday? They had brought their wives and children, their sweet-hearts and relations, out for pleasure, and they were not going to be balked. So they demanded that the entertainment should proceed. The Mayor objected, and this objection aroused the lurking tiger. Men and women rose *en masse*, and shouted, screamed, gesticulated frantically, and swore horribly, threatening, if the show was not continued, that they would burn the place down. So the mangled old man was dragged out of the ring by means of

ropes, and his son continued the fight, and succeeded at last in slaying the bull.

This revolting spectacle did not take place in Spain, nor even in London, but in La Belle France. Suppose we could read for "France" England. What *would* our dear neighbours say of us? They might feel that their language was too poor in condemnatory phrases to enable them to express their full measure of disgust and contempt. Really we ought to be very thankful that our country so far has been satisfied with man-and-dog fights and Amazonian encounters between half-naked females, and has not yet aspired to such displays as the mangling of an old man and the fiendish torturing of a bull.

Coming back to the "gay capital," I was the eye-witness of another exhibition such as I am fain to believe has no counterpart amongst us brutal Saxons. It was a display of what was described as *Des Sculptres Vivants*, and this is what I saw in a house not ten minutes' walk from the Boulevard des Italiens:—In a large room a stage was fitted, and at a given signal the painted curtain was drawn up, revealing a revolving table, on which were posed four girls, two brunettes and two blondes. In respect to their attire, they were in exactly that state which we are informed was peculiar to our first parents before the little incident of the apple, with the exception of a gauze scarf that each carried and draped about her body, in accordance with the statue she represented. The limelight threw its searching rays over the *tableaux*, which were highly appreciated by a large audience, consisting mainly of boys and young men.

That this exhibition was indecent, as viewed from our Saxon point of view, I think will be readily admitted; but there was a certain grace about it that lifted it above the demoralising and disgusting *Bal Bullier*, which may be witnessed any Sunday evening in the Boulevard St. Michel, in the Latin Quartier. Here young Paris takes its fling with unrestrained licence. Girls extremely young in years, but exceedingly old in vice, come in company with young men who are conspicuous by their great expanse of shirt-front, cut low in the neck so as to expose the collar-bones, massive cuffs which fall over their coarse, red hands, and bell-shaped trousers that almost hide their cramped-up feet.

The ball begins about ten o'clock, and is opened by the *can-can*, danced by paid professionals, men and women. I doubt very much if any capital in Europe can show a more revoltingly disgusting display than this. But young Paris enjoys it immensely, and enters into the spirit of the fun with great heartiness. The shop-girls, catching the fever of excitement, cast modesty and bashfulness to the winds. By midnight the ball has degenerated into a hellish revel, and in sorrow and shame I draw the curtain over it.

As further evidence that we are not entitled to claim all the brutality, I may refer to the "Salles," where *L'Art de la Savate* is practised. No doubt comparatively few of my fellow-Saxons will ever have heard of *L'Art de la Savate*, therefore I may explain that it means kicking, and the "*savater*" is a kicker, pure and simple. This science holds much the same place amongst the French that boxing does with us. A boxing-match is generally a degrading and demoralising spectacle, but it is play compared with the French art of kicking. In the worst parts of Paris, where it is practised amongst the lower classes, it is ferocious brutality of the very worst kind. The object of the two men opposed to each other is to kick each other's shins; and if what is known as the *coup sec* happens to fall with full force on the shin-bone, the leg is invariably broken. Then there is the *coup de poing en avant*, by which the jaw is kicked out of shape; and the *coup de pied en arrière*, by which a man, having dropped on to his hands, by a quick, sudden movement, darts out one of his legs, and delivers a tremendous lunge in the abdomen of his opponent, with the frequent result of the production of intense agony or death. These encounters are not rare, but very frequent; and, as compared with the brutes who take part in them, I think we ought to be proud of our fellows who accept punches on the head at from sixpence to eighteenpence a punch.

CHAPTER V.

M. Jules Ferry's Little Joke—French Morality—French Hypocrisy—
French Crime of Vitriol Throwing.

M. JULES FERRY, in a long circular, which he recently issued to the French schoolmasters, on moral teaching, tells them that they have to teach nothing "but what is familiar to them, as to all honest people—namely, the 'good old morality we have received from our fathers.'" They are to speak with emphasis and authority on all unquestioned truths and moral precepts, but to be very guarded whenever there is a risk of touching a religious sentiment—of which they are not the judges. M. Ferry concludes by giving a list of the books which have already been used by schoolmasters to assist them in this teaching; but he leaves them free to choose any text-book they please. The list contains some books which the clergy have declared objectionable.

M. Jules Ferry must have been in a grimly satirical mood when he drafted that circular. On reading it one scarcely knows whether to laugh or blush. Fancy the *good old morality we have received from our fathers*! It sounds like a ghastly joke.

Is there—I ask the question in sober earnestness—is there a more immoral people amongst the civilised nations of the earth than the French?

To be French is to be immoral: the terms are synonymous. There is only one other thing that is stronger in them, and that is vanity, with which I shall deal a little later.

Even the listless summer visitor to Paris, who saunters leisurely along the Boulevards staring into the shop-windows, is suddenly disgusted as his eyes light on some photograph or picture flaunted with brazen impudence in the public gaze. But these are only the straws which show how the current flows. There is in the French mind a morbid craving for the beastly, and this craving is never

allowed to go unsatisfied. The Bullier ball, the living sculpture, the sham wrestling between men and women, and other disgusting things that cannot be touched on here, are evidence of this ; but if one takes French literature, we find there a total disregard of even instinctive decency.

It long ago passed into a proverb, that French literature was coarse and immoral ; but one must live in France and read French to thoroughly understand the degrading depths of filth that French writers descend to. As soon as ever girls and boys commence to read they fly instinctively to this class of literature, which renders them prurient almost before they have cast off their bibs. It is pitiable to hear how girls of tender age will talk of things that shock sensitive ears, and to see how youths, while yet the down is on their cheeks, are debased and debauched. This national immorality is, as it were, a pestilential blast that sweeps through the land and blights.

I once heard a distinguished Russian nobleman say, that it would be difficult to find an honest man or virtuous woman in all France. I am not quite prepared to endorse that, but I fearlessly assert that immorality is a national vice. You see it staring you in the face on the Boulevards at night ; you see it in the cafés ; in the Brasseries, where women are waiters instead of men ; in sculpture galleries, in picture galleries, in illustrated papers, in shop windows, in the theatres ; it displays itself in the talk of the people and the acts of the people. It is howled forth from the painted lips of the raddled *cancaneuse* ; it is heard in the dulcet tones of the lady in the *salon* ; and it finds its culmination in the licensed houses—the “Big Numbers,” as they are called, where nightly thousands of unhappy and shameless women are actors in scenes that would make the very angels weep.

Perhaps one could hardly expect to find even a mediocre standard of morality in a country where marriage is purely a question of money. From the poorest peasants to the highest in the land, this question is *the* question, and the only one, considered when marriage is concerned. If there happens to be love between the contracting parties, well and good ; but if there is not, it is not of the slightest con-

sequence if the necessary "Dot" is there. That is the great thing—the *Dot*! How much has he or she got? It will readily be understood from this how it has come to be a saying that "a woman in France has only one husband, but many lovers." In ten cases out of every twelve, the invariable result of these mercenary marriages is, that a few months, often a few weeks, after the ceremony, the lover or lovers put in an appearance. The wife goes her way, the husband goes his, which is to his mistress; and this infidelity is the cause of the frightful domestic misery common throughout France. This misery does not gain so much publicity as it occasionally does with us because there is no law of divorce in France; but it is there, nevertheless, as every one knows who has ever lived in the country, and frequently it displays itself in those ghastly tragedies which make the world shudder—to wit, the Charenton murder case the other day, which is a fair type.

Of course, where there is so little regard for the sacredness of the marriage bond, it follows as a natural thing that the virtue which the French are so fond of talking about is only assumed, and, like French religion, is only the shadow of the substance. For it is certain that if there is no virtue in France there is no religion, and yet a man or woman would rather die than not go to church on Sunday morning. If the dictionary definition of the word hypocrisy is correct, this is surely hypocrisy of a very repulsive kind. At any rate, I recommend it to the notice of M. Jules Vallés. Perhaps he will set me right, if I am wrong.

When parents have so little regard for morality, what can be expected from the children? Young minds take their tone from their surroundings, and so it would be difficult to point to another country where there is more juvenile depravity than in France. English parents would do well to remember this when they contemplate sending their children to school there.

When morality is lacking, a disregard for decency comes in its place, and this may account for the many things that are allowed to shock foreigners who visit French towns. It accounts, also, for the filthy habits of the men and the shamelessness of the women. I am aware that this subject is not a pleasant one, and I would rather have avoided it,

but my little book would hardly have been complete unless I had touched upon it.

It has been my lot to visit most of the big towns in France, and I most solemnly affirm that in any one of these towns there is more glaring immorality and indecency than our great, teeming London, with its 5,000,000, could possibly show. We may be hypocritical, gloomy, melancholy ; we may correct our wives by thrashing them, instead of strangling them, shooting them, poisoning them, setting them on fire by pouring lighted mineral oil over them, as was done a few days ago in Paris, and all of which modes of correction seem to be peculiar to Frenchmen ; but we do, at least, hide away certain things in order that the sense of decency may not be too much outraged. But amongst our gay and pleasant Gallic friends these things are managed differently.

If the men in France have their own peculiar little ways for dealing with their wives and mistresses, the women are not behind them in the treatment of their faithless lovers, as witness the following, which I quote from a London daily paper* :—

“A whole series of those remarkable crimes of female vengeance which from time to time disturb the serenity of French society has recently occurred at Paris, and has directed attention for the hundredth time to the alarming prevalence of this class of offences. Two bad cases of disfigurement by vitriol-throwing were followed by two assassinations, the assailant being in each case a woman, and the cause of the crime being invariably the jealousy of a mistress who had been abandoned or threatened with abandonment. In one instance, the crowded and popular emporium of the Louvre was the scene of the outrage. A woman was observed to go up to one of the shopmen in charge of an important department, and suddenly drawing a bottle of vitriol endeavour to drench the unfortunate man with the horrible fluid. Her hand being arrested, however, by bystanders, she only succeeded in inflicting comparatively slight injuries. As her excuse, she declared that she had been betrayed, and that she had only sought to obtain revenge.

* *Morning Post*, December, 1883.

"A couple of days afterwards a more frightful affair took place. A man who was about to be married was suddenly attacked in the street by a young woman, who, rushing towards him with a bottle of vitriol, succeeded in emptying almost the whole of the contents over his face and neck before she could be prevented, and almost before she had been noticed. Her miserable victim was taken up from the ground and carried to a hospital in a condition impossible to describe in adequate terms. The semblance of the human countenance was gone. The festering corrosive had eaten to the very bone like a living fire, and the pain of the sufferer was expressed in the most terrifying shouts and yells of mortal agony. The woman was seized, and a couple of days later was, according to the usual proceeding in French law, to be confronted with her victim. When told of his awful state, she exhibited no signs of contrition, but, on the contrary, declared that if she could get near enough she would tear off the bandages in which his frightful wounds were swathed in order to increase his tortures if she could.

"What is called the drama of the Rue de Turenne only took place on Thursday last. A rising young merchant was about to marry the niece of the proprietor of one of the large shops which are becoming such a feature of modern Paris. The wedding party were all assembled at the house of the parents of the bride, waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom to proceed to the solemnisation of the marriage. After half an hour's delay, there arrived not the future husband but his partner and friend, who told the company the startling news that a woman had assassinated him, and that the murderess was lying in a hopeless state from a revolver wound inflicted by her own hand. As the young man was about to leave for the house of his *fiancée*, a girl with whom he had lived, and whom he had abandoned, had besought a parting interview; had remorselessly cut his throat so fearfully with a huge Catalan knife that he died within a couple of minutes; and had shot herself in the head with the pistol which, along with the knife, she had brought with her.

"It may be said that in this last case it was comparatively a redeeming feature that the murderess attempted

her own life as well, and the circumstance will no doubt be made the theme of an irresistible appeal to the jury, should the assassin recover from her serious injuries, and be brought before a jury of the Department of the Seine. But in truth, according to almost invariable precedent, a female vitriol-thrower or assassin in France who alleges jealousy or desertion as the motive of her crime need fear nothing from a French jury. The woman or girl who has avenged her slighted affection is always acquitted amid a scene of tender emotion, and leaves the court with proud humility amid the waving of moistened pocket-handkerchiefs. Numerous cases, as horrible as any we have mentioned, have occurred of late years in France; and though sometimes the victim was able to appear and present the evidence of his seared and distorted countenance, burned and withered almost out of human shape, the prosecution almost invariably failed to obtain the slightest penalty against any of the female perpetrators of such merciless savagery.

"In one notorious instance, where an actress had fired at and severely wounded a gentleman who had left her and pensioned her, the culprit, after being acquitted by the jury, set out on a starring tour through the provinces, and half the theatres and *cafés chantants* between Calais and Marseilles competed for the possession of such a remarkable personage.

"The extraordinary part of the phenomenon must appear to ordinary people to be that, while such strange sympathy, amounting to a habitual license for the most atrocious exhibitions of female revenge, sways the minds of the class from which the French juries are taken, there is no corresponding moral condemnation of the libertinism which is the root of all the evil."

I do not think we brutal Saxons can beat that, bad as we may be; and it must be remembered that such cases as those mentioned above are of almost daily occurrence in France.

CHAPTER VI.

The Deformed Feet of the French—French Vanity—The use of English things in France—A Frenchman Cousin to the Virgin Mary—The Spread of the English Language and Decline of the French—Marseilles, a Sodom and Gomorrah—Misery of French Peasantry—The French Budget—Position of France.

AS one peruses Mr. Max O'Rell's book, he is led to the conclusion that the author, during his long exile amongst us, must have chronically been in that condition which causes a man to see double, inasmuch as he states that all Englishwomen have prominent teeth and large feet. Possibly the distinguished refugee suffered from the inferior absinthe sold in the cafés in the locality of Lee-ces-ter-square, or, it may be, our English "pel-lel"* had the effect of producing an optical delusion. We can hardly hope that Mr. O'Rell will solve the problem for us, and life is too short for us to attempt to solve it for ourselves. We will consequently accept the prominent teeth as a new national characteristic. The big feet is *not* a new one, for our kind critics have never tired of dwelling upon this insular peculiarity.

So far as my own limited intelligence allows me to form an opinion upon this question, I would respectfully beg leave to advance the proposition that large feet are not altogether a drawback. Mr. O'Rell, in common with all his countrymen, when he expends his Gallic wit upon our feet, quite overlooks the anatomical view of the subject. He himself represents a Latin, and consequently a small-boned, race of people, while we, being Saxons, Normans, Danes, and Norsemen, come from a stock of large-boned men and women; and I believe that it is admitted by anatomists that in a general way that people with large and bony frames are more energetic, more determined, stronger, and longer-lived than the races with small bones. This would seem to account for three things:—(1) Our supe-

* *Anglice*, Pale Ale.

riority to the French as a fighting people ; (2) our superiority as explorers and colonists ; (3) our having worsted France in all our encounters with her, whether of a naval, military, or diplomatic character.

If the above deductions are correct, we may fairly feel proud of our big feet. But suppose we turn our attention for a moment to the small feet of our French friends.

It is pretty certain that some day there will be included exhibitions of "instruments of torture" that modern instrument of torture, a French boot. A Paris chiropodist of some note once told me that seventy-five per cent. of French people had deformed feet. Whether this statement had any foundation in fact or not I have never been able to satisfactorily determine, but I am strongly disposed to believe it did not fall far short of the truth. For a Frenchman is eternally racking his brain to try and discover the very smallest possible amount of space into which his feet will compress. The result of this is, as every one has seen, that painfully mincing gait so peculiar to French people.

It is a significant fact that the soldiers of the French army seem to have feet like other ordinary mortals so far as size is concerned ; and this because the men are obliged to wear broad-sole boots with low heels. As soon as ever a man comes out of the army, however, he goes in for a course of the squeezing process, and in the course of time, aided by a delusive, bell-shaped trouser-leg, and after much suffering, succeeds in deforming his feet apparently to Chinese proportions.

No one will fail to understand, unless he be very dull of comprehension indeed, that this mania for small feet is the result of an unbounded vanity. And my own impression is, that were it not for this vanity, we could take a Frenchman to our bosom and really love him, his many other faults notwithstanding. But oh that vanity ! It is dreadful.

We all know what Prince von Bismarck said on this very subject. He declared Apollo to be the true type of a Frenchman, "who will not own that another plays the flute better, or even so well as himself." There is a terrible sting and a great truth in this ; for the French people believe, and are sincere in their belief too, that they are the

salt of the earth. To attempt to convince them that there are other peoples as clever as they, if not cleverer, would be as hopeless a task as to try to discover the "fourth dimension." This singular and amusing trait comes out very strong in M. Vallés' work, where he says that everything good and enduring in England is due to a French origin. It is very strange this. One is almost tempted into the heresy of doubt, especially as we call to mind that at the present moment French railways are being modelled on the English pattern; that French gentlemen abjure their own tailors and go to English tailors for their clothes*; that Paris ladies are dressed, and Paris fashions set, by an Irishman—Mr. Worth; that recently a body of railway engineers came to London to study our Underground Railway, in order that they may make one in Paris like it; that for a long time a project has been before the Paris public for building a place of recreation exactly like our Crystal Palace, on the same model and plan. (By the way, perhaps M. Vallés will admit that *we* invented international exhibitions.) Nor is this all; there is a perfect rage in France just now for *articles Anglais*. English biscuits are consumed by hundreds and thousands of tons; English pale ale is esteemed far above any of the choice French brews; special Christmas literature and illustrated papers, à l'Anglaise, have recently come into vogue; English cutlery takes precedence over French, and English electro-plate is regarded as infinitely superior to anything France can turn out. English plum-puddings are also looked upon as dainty *bonne bouche*, and are eagerly coveted, and a *chef* who cannot concoct a plum-pudding in the English manner is not considered to be perfect in his art. An English razor is said to be worth half a dozen French ones; and English soaps are much prized; while no fashionable house is considered to be properly furnished unless the floors of its best rooms are covered with English carpets. English flannels

* At a meeting a little while ago of the Syndicate of French tailors in Paris, a member, M. Ducher, made a complaint which would seem to show that the taste for garments cut in the English style is rapidly spreading among Frenchmen. So recently as 1875 M. Ducher said there were only thirteen English tailors in Paris, doing business to the amount of 1,400,000 francs a year, whereas at present there are thirty-nine, whose dealings amount to 13,500,000 francs.

find a ready sale in preference to French ones; English carriages, dog-carts, saddlery, and small things of that kind, are the rage. And next to being dressed well, a fashionable French lady's ambition is to learn to ride like an English miss or madame; and will French men or women deny that we have taught them to ride? And so I might go on almost *ad infinitum*, but I have said enough to show that M. Vallés, in his haste to pass a verdict upon us, did not judge us fairly. Stop!—I must not forget to mention that English agricultural implements and machinery, English bicycles and tricycles, English ink, pens, and sealing-wax, are to be found everywhere in France now. But, as I have said, French vanity is a very real thing. It yields to nothing or nobody. And could this be better exemplified than by citing the case of the French Duke of Levis, who used to show an old painting, which represented one of his ancestors, a Prince of Judah, bowing to the Virgin Mary, who says, "Couvrez-vous mon cousin"? Then the well-known family of Croy possessed a no less silly picture, which showed Noah entering the ark, and exclaiming, "Sauvez les papiers de la maison de Croy." But this is quite in keeping with the expression of Madame de la Meilleraye, a cousin of Cardinal Richelieu, who, speaking of the Chevalier de Savoie, a man of high birth, but most dissolute habits, who had been rebuked, said, "Depend upon it, God will think twice before damning a gentleman of his quality." *

The Duc de Clermont-Sonnerre also said, in speaking of himself, "God will never dare to damn a duke and peer."†

A people who can be guilty of such silly vanity as this may almost be pardoned for thinking all other nations inferior to themselves. And yet French vanity is a very objectionable thing, as it quite prevents our dear neighbours from seeing aught good in any one else. Even the English language is not studied in France because the French believe that their own is to become the universal language of the world. And this in spite of recently-published figures, which show that French-speaking people

* *Quand il s'agit des gens de cette qualité, Dieu y regarde bien à deux fois pour les damner.*

† *Le bon Dieu n'aura jamais le cœur de damner un duc et pair.*

are declining, and French is not now spoken by more than 50,000,000. Whereas, English is rapidly spreading, and is spoken by upwards of 150,000,000. In fact, it has been calculated, on the basis of fairly accurate data, that in another half-century the English tongue will have spread all over the earth. This is quite understood by our kinsmen the Germans: and some of their writers have actually published their principal works in English first, in order to secure that attention which it is the pardonable vanity of all authors to think themselves entitled to; and, secondly, to lay the best foundation for immortality. German writers are justified in this, for they know that their own countrymen go forth as emigrants by thousands to English and American colonies, and their children help to swell the great English-speaking races. Nor is the decline of French to be at all wondered at, for in no way will it compare with the grand, resonant, vigorous, sturdy English tongue, every word of which nearly has a value. Whereas, in French, out of about 40,000 words of which it is composed, 20,000 are said to be almost useless, and 10,000 more so pedantic as to be seldom uttered; consequently, the French tongue is reduced to about 10,000.* The above remarks, which are based on statistical returns, ought to have some tendency to check French Chauvinism. But it will do nothing of the sort. If the author of *Va-nu-Pieds de Londres* were writing a new edition of his work to-morrow, and had the above facts before him,

* In an article which he has just contributed to the *Revue Scientifique*, General Faidherbe, the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honour, has given expression to an opinion which is already attracting a good deal of attention. In examining the measures which it would be best to employ with a view to the propagation of the French language throughout the colonies, the General, who is no mean authority on the subject of which he treats, as he has sojourned long in Algeria, Senegal, and other French possessions, positively declares that native populations take far more readily to English than to the tongue of the conquering race. This he ascribes to the difficulties which the barbarian encounters in his efforts to conjugate the French verbs, and so forth. General Faidherbe recommends the formation of classes, in which the French names for ordinary objects should be taught. Most of the tenses should be removed from the grammar, and as for the genders, the less said about them the better. Some critics have already taken exception to these suggestions. It is at least instructive to learn that even in Algeria the Arab still picks up English words with far more ease than French ones.

he would still describe London as a place of "a quarter of a million prostitutes ; where there is frightful debauchery of the young ; and miles of gloomy public-houses filled with besotted wretches." As I have attempted to show, all these things have their counterpart in every part of France. Look at Marseilles, for instance. Surely some day the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah will overtake that superlatively wicked city. Look at Lyons, Bordeaux, Macon. I have always thought, in common with a large portion of the world, that "the debauchery of the young" was an institution very peculiar to France. This would really seem to be true, if we may judge from the fact that in Paris alone there are said to be 5,000 girls under thirteen years of age leading immoral lives ; 7,000 under fifteen ; and 35,000 under eighteen. This seems to be debauchery of the young with a vengeance ; and it is well to remember that these 47,000 young girls of tender years have a licence from the Government to ply their hideous trade, and the figures do not include many thousands of wretched outcasts who have no licence at all.*

Again, French vanity—if it were not an incurable disease—ought to receive a wholesome shock in the statement made at a recent meeting of the "Trades Confraternity" at Paris. The speaker, M. Martin Nadaud, the deputy for Creuse, told his hearers that, according to official statistics presented to the French Chamber, there are no fewer than "140,000 *houses in France unprovided with the elementary convenience of windows, and which have no other flooring than the soil ; that are utterly without even the most rudimentary sanitary conveniences ; that are without chimneys and without light ; and that whole families live in them, together with the domestic animals and pigs for guests.*"

Such a statement as this, coming from so authentic a source, will certainly shock our dense Saxon minds, and we shall no doubt wonder to ourselves what is likely to be the fate of the young of these families. Any one who knows anything of the French peasantry of the small villages,

* The latter class come under the heading in French of *Prostituées clandestines*, and *Filles libres*. These last are said to be as 1 to every 341 inhabitants.

especially in Dauphiné, must be horrified at their besotted brutishness, their gross superstition, their filthy habits, their utter ignorance, and the debauchery of their children. For how can the young, reared amidst such surroundings, be otherwise than debauched? It is, indeed, a sickening picture, and one almost weeps over it; and I would pray to M. France, if I thought that he would heed my prayer, to kindly turn his attention to his own debased country, and in his own small way do his endeavour to raise these thousands and thousands of his countrymen, and women, and children, who are sunk in a Stygian slough of body and soul destroying moral filth. In fact, the present condition of France is such that the efforts of every Frenchman are seriously needed, if they would save their suffering country from horrors that will totally eclipse those of the past. Speaking of the present condition of France, a recent well-informed writer* draws a very gloomy picture of the country. He says:—

“The past year has been for France serious, yet indecisive; gloomy as regards events, meagre in results. In politics, industry, and finance, it does not leave a single bright spot on the horizon. It has created gaps, and left them unfilled; it has raised questions without solving them. It is one of the most anxious and least glorious years which have elapsed since the fall of the Empire. At its very outset it was marked by the deaths of Gambetta and Chanzy; not to speak of the tragical end of De Wimpffen, the Austrian Ambassador.

“The void caused by Gambetta's death can now be gauged, and its effects may be summed up in the phrase, ‘As he was not to complete his work, it would have been better had he not appeared.’ He has left no doctrine or disciple, no principle or solution; and in all his utterances there is not one of those truths which survive the speaker, and are a beacon for the bewildered. He had, however, that breadth of mind and readiness of conception which leads a man suddenly to retrace his steps. Long prior to his death he had perceived the injury he had inflicted on French moral interests, domestic peace, and the develop-

* Paris Correspondent of the *Times*.

ment of Republicanism, by the thoughtless cry of *Le Cléricalisme, voilà l'ennemi!* He was quite prepared to call back the mob, and to remedy the blunders caused by his rallying cry; but his professed followers, once on the scent, continue blindly to follow it, deaf to those who tell them they have long gone too far and should hark back. They indulge in tactics both ridiculous and odious, and damage their master's reputation by citing his long-past cry in justification of their stupidity. The Government will be forced in January or February to raise a loan to cover the deficit."

That the above is too true, every Frenchman must admit. Even M. Paul Leroy, a rabid Republican, has openly declared that "seldom in the whole course of history has the situation of France been, from an international point of view, more precarious."

Her people are worse paid, harder worked, infinitely more heavily taxed, worse clothed, worse fed, and more debased than the same classes are in our own country. They are subject to an inquisitorial system of espionage by a ruffian and corrupt police, every man of whom has his price; they are badgered by Government officials; they are ground down by an iron law of conscription, and political liberty there is none. And the potent cause of this misery and decay is the want of continuity of an honest Government. The budget drawn up for the present year reaches the enormous sum of £160,000,000, or nearly double what our own is; and that £160,000,000 represents an annual taxation of upwards of £4. 10s. per head of the population. On this very subject our own *Pall Mall Gazette*, which is strongly French in its sympathies, writes:—

"The enormous budget for 1884 is being successfully hustled through the French Senate, which resigns itself to endorsing the votes of the Chamber. This impotence of the Senate is all the more to be regretted as the expenditure of the Republic stands sadly in need of overhauling. But to a still greater extent it is attributable to the *deplorable carelessness of the Chamber of Deputies about the public money.* Their collective interest, as a Chamber, in keeping down expenditure is nothing like so strong as the individual interest of the majority of members in multiplying small

places, which will enable them to purchase local popularity and so keep their seats."

Another able authority, and a Frenchman to boot, says :— "Paris is not prospering, or France either; but Paris is far worse off than France. The working classes earn their bread, as a rule, from two branches of industry, namely, the manufacture of *articles de luxe* and house-building. The latter class still finds a fair amount of employment, but in a very short time this will be no longer the case. There are now whole streets of new and untenanted houses. We may be quite sure that a year hence there will be no more building in Paris. I attribute the present state of things to the marked depreciation in the fortunes and incomes of the wealthier classes during the past two years. This also accounts for the fact that there is a far smaller demand for *objets de luxe*. Then, too, the diminution of France's prestige has re-acted on Paris. Success of any kind, even that won on the battle-field, benefits the trade of a country. The strikes and exaggerated pretensions of some of the workmen have also lost some of its markets to Parisian industry. I deeply regret the blunders made by those who have directed France's economic and financial policy during the past five years. If the State gives up prodigality, such as no other nation has ever been guilty of; if it adopts a conciliatory and conservative policy; and if it tries to win the confidence of the public, instead of disquieting interests with plans of new taxes on incomes and luxuries, and with projects of State socialism—then what is incorrectly termed the crisis may gradually diminish. But if the State perseveres in the financial debauch inaugurated some years ago, I really do not know what the position of Paris, and even of France, will be in 1885 and 1886.*

Although I know it will not, I still fain would hope that the foregoing startling facts might exercise some salutary influence upon French vanity, but it is a plant of too strong a growth. Its roots go down into the earth and are nourished with blood, and its branches tower up into the clouds.

* M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *Journal des Debats*, January 25, 1884.

CHAPTER VII.

French Duelling and its Absurdity—The Valour of M. Jules Vallés—The Decoration of the Legion of Honour—French Officialism : its Arrogance and Impertinence—The Paris *Figaro* on Official Jobbery and Dishonesty—"Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité"—The Brotherhood of Cain—"Be my Brother or I will Kill you"—The French Police—The Spy System—The Torture in French Prisons.

I DWELT at some length in the preceding chapter on the extraordinary vanity of our good neighbours: a vanity so overpowering that it blinds them to any little good qualities other nations may possess. It has generally been supposed that this human weakness was one peculiar to women, but in France it affects both sexes alike. In the women it displays itself in an inordinate love for finery and dress, and in the men in a desire to have small feet, some jewellery, and to be thought handsome; while in both sexes, it leads them to look upon everything that is not French as utterly beneath contempt. French women, however, are far superior to the men. Not only do they possess courage, but they occasionally display heroism.

It was Voltaire, I think, who said, "Frenchmen are the women of Europe." A Frenchman has no real courage. The tiger in his nature can always be aroused, and then he becomes daringly ferocious, but without this he is a tame, morbidly-sentimental creature. If a Frenchman of the middle class happens to be struck in a dispute or quarrel, he falls to and weeps to think that such an indignity should have been put upon him. If he belongs to the lower class, he resents a blow by slashing his opponent with his knife or viciously kicking him like a mad bull. The foreigner who lives in France grows weary and sick at hearing the eternal cry about French honour—the honour that, being only veneer, is satisfied with the slightest scratch. Could anything be more ridiculous, more childish, more pitiable than the so-called "encounters" that one hears as having taken place between two Frenchmen whose honour and pride have been wounded; though it is generally the pride

and not the honour, as that is only a very flimsy thing in France. Well, two of these women of Europe, having heaped vile abuse upon each other's heads, agree to "meet." The hour comes, and, having gone through a good deal of farcical ceremony, put on their cleanest shirts, and well-primed themselves with absinthe, they start off with their friends, and the "encounter" takes place. There is generally a good deal of terrific sparring, just for the look of the thing, you know; then one of them receives a little scratch, — sometimes, perhaps, he carries a pin in the band of his trousers, and scratches himself; the doctor rushes forward at the sight of the two or three beads of blood; declares that the much-damaged honour is now quite well again; the two combatants, the seconds, the doctor, and their friends fall upon each other's necks and weep, and, putting on their clothes, repair to the nearest café for some more absinthe.* Sometimes it happens that the weapons chosen for these dreadful meetings are pistols, in which case the seconds are very careful to impress upon the principals to hold their weapons pointing upwards at an angle of forty-five degrees, so that the bullets may pass harmlessly towards the clouds. Of course, it occasionally comes about that accidents occur, owing to these gentlemen of wounded honour handling their weapons carelessly; then, very likely, one of them gets run through the body or shot through the lungs, and, as a natural consequence, dies. There is a great deal of weeping then, and much absinthe is consumed. If the slain one happens to have had a wife or mistress, a sum of money is given to her, and she hastens to get a new husband or lover, as the case may be.

Now, even we gloomy and melancholy Saxons think all this very funny and droll; for, when our fogs and our

* On Tuesday, January 29, present year, M Jules Gros, chief editor of the *Petit Comtois*, conceived himself to be offended by something that was said in the *Démocratie Franc-Comtois*, of which M. Viette, Deputy of the Doubs, is considered to be one of the inspirers. A challenge was sent and a duel decided upon. It was fought (*sic*) on the date named on the Plateau of Châtillon. The weapons were pistols, and the distance thirty-five paces, at which most people would find a difficulty even in hitting a haystack. M. Viette fired first, and his bullet lodged in the *lining of his antagonist's coat*; M. Gros then discharged his weapon in the air. Honour was then declared to be satisfied; both men shook hands, and the whole party adjourned to a café to breakfast. *Vide Paris Press*, January 30, 1884.

gloom permit us, we are capable of discerning the ludicrous side of a thing. No doubt, also, M. Jules Vallés takes much the same view as ourselves. At any rate, that doughty gentleman displayed almost grim humour the other day, after he had applied so many pretty terms to the students of the Quartier Latin. The denizens of that scholastic Alsatia did not like being accused of empty-headedness, of rottenness, and imbecility. Consequently, they sent a deputation to wait upon the somewhat too irascible editor of *Le Cri du Peuple*. The students, no doubt, were very much in earnest, so M. Jules Vallés showed his redoubtable valour by refusing to see them, fearing possibly that he might get too deeply scratched. But he gave them this answer in his paper: "*I will only meet you behind a barricade.*" It is not very clear what this meant; though, no doubt, some of M. Vallés' Communistic memories of '70-71 were uppermost at that moment. The disappointed students consequently have not yet had the satisfaction of scratching the brave editor. If, instead of French students they had been English, they would have horsewhipped M. Vallés or have thrown him into a horse-pond; possibly have done both. But then they manage these things very much better in France. Next to this, what we are pleased to think in our insular stupidity, ridiculous system of duelling for the satisfaction of an honour that requires a microscope to discover it, is the absurd craving in a Frenchman's mind for a "decoration." Here, again, that powerful national vanity displays itself, and if a Frenchman can only get a bit of tinsel round his cap, or the tiny scrap of red ribbon at his button-hole, he is supremely happy. If we Saxons have decorations, we generally stow them away, but a Frenchman flaunts his on every possible occasion. Only give one of our worthy friends a tin-medal for something or other, and he will strut about as proud as a peacock. It is within the power of nearly every Frenchman to become a "Chevalier of the Legion of Honour," and as they all get the decoration, it may account for their freedom from the gloom and melancholy that affect us. Now it does not matter in France whether you are a butcher, or baker, or hotel-keeper, or dust-contractor, or chimney-sweeper, that little morsel of red ribbon, denoting

the Chevaliership, is within your reach. I fancy that no more senseless decoration exists in Europe or the world.

Following this craving comes the one to hold some official appointment. It doesn't matter what it is so long as it is "Officiel." To be a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and to be an official, are the *summum bonum* of a Frenchman's ambition.

Throughout France officialism is its curse. It is at once insolent, arrogant, overbearing, insulting. Every foreigner who has ever visited the country knows this to his bitter cost. Officialism is a bugbear and incubus that you cannot shake off. It meets you at every step. Do you want to get a letter registered, go into a *bureau de poste*, and see how you will be insulted by the jackanapish officialism there, as it puffs its villanous tobacco-smoke into your face; and if you happen to be a defenceless woman, depend upon it it will be more insolent. Do you want to claim a piece of luggage from the *douane*, go to the window of the *caisse*, and as officialism, with a savage glare, opens the tiny pigeon-hole, letting a stream of tobacco-smoke and carbonic-acid gas flow into your nostrils, note how overbearing it is, though possibly it has only been just raised from the gutter. Do you want to take a journey somewhere by train, behold how officialism tramples upon you, and, still half-asphyxiating you with smoke, it shuts you up in a pen as if you were cattle. Then, when you are released, approach officialism on the platform with a view to making some inquiry, and you will start back in horror, especially if you be a woman or young girl, as officialism turns and half-blinds you with its cigarette-smoke, and half-chokes you with its garlic-reeking breath, as it roars : *Je ne sais pas*.

If you go to a theatre, officialism confronts you ; always smoking, mind, for smoke is its badge. If you ride in an omnibus, you meet it ; if you visit the Invalides, it rises up and crushes you. It is, in fact, an "old man of the sea," that you cannot by any possibility shake off. And though sometimes you are tempted to take officialism by the nose, and tweak it, and thrash some of the insolence out of it, it is better that you do not, for then you would be confronted with officialism in an infinitely more terrible form.

Here are some few particulars as to what officialism means in Paris. These particulars are taken from the Paris *Figaro*, and consequently are not evolved out of the inner consciousness of a brutal Saxon. The writer in the *Figaro* waxes indignant at the scandalous jobbery and waste of public money in providing the "idle monkeys" with positions. He asserts that at the Ministry of Finance alone there are 159 employés living rent free. At the Ministry of Commerce the "housekeeping expenses" were, in 1875, 6,000,000 francs per annum. In the Budget for 1884 these expenses are put down 21,000,000. It seems incredible, but it is true. The cost of *lighting* that same Ministry in 1875 was only 2,500 francs; now it is 23,000. Fuel was charged for in 1875, 20,000 francs; now it is 40,000. Postage and telegraphs in the same period have risen from 2,500 francs to 40,000, and linen from 600 francs to 11,500. These figures are startling, and this drain of the taxes, which are ground out of the peasantry, goes to support an immense army of useless, idle nincompoops, whose vanity has led them to lick the dust off somebody's shoes, in order to get into official positions. It is well known that French official salaries are ridiculously low, but it is made up for by perquisites, such as lighting, fuel, free quarters, furnishing; and there are ten men to do the work of one. It is the same in the post-office, telegraph, custom-house—in short, in every public department.

Goethe wrote in the second volume of his "Aphorisms," and referring to the French: "What sort of liberality is that which everybody talks about, but will hinder his neighbour from practising." That is peculiarly a French state of matters. Liberality is dinned into your ears until you sicken, but it is never, never practised. On church doors, on the public buildings, on the bridges, everywhere in France is carved the Republican motto; "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Never before, save in France, has such a grim and ghastly satire been perpetuated in stone. Liberty there is none, as I will prove; equality consists of the rich looking down with contempt on the *bourgeois*, and of the *bourgeois* hating with venomous hatred the *canaille*. The fraternity is what Sebastian Chamfort called

a "Brotherhood of Cain"—that is, "Be my brother, or I will kill thee."*

So much for *Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité* in France. And now for the vaunted liberty of free and civilised France. Let us see what it is.

There is not a French deputy or prefect who has not his doings reported from day to day. The £80,000 voted for "secret service money" annually must be accounted for somehow; not to the authorities, because no such account is ever given or expected, but to the outside world, who protest, but still allow the system to continue. An English journalist not many weeks ago told a *garde municipal* that he was an idiot. He was arrested there and then. The thing happened in a theatre. The commissary began by bullying, and ended by letting the journalist go, on his promise to appear the next morning. A *proces-verbal* was drawn up. The commissary, who saw the merits of the case, recommended the journalist to see the substitute of the Procureur de la République to explain the matter. The journalist went for three successive days, and came away with a flea in his ear. He decided to let the matter rest; for four weeks he did not hear of it. At last he received a summons to appear at the Police Correctionnelle. Meanwhile every inquiry had been made in almost every place where he was known, including the various apartments he had occupied during his several years' stay in Paris. The political shades of the various journals he represented were ascertained; his friends were watched; also the company they frequented. The matter came before the court; he was fined fifty francs and costs, and another fifty francs for having called a policeman an idiot. This is but an infinitesimal part of the system.

You cannot live in Paris for a day but what it is known who you are, where you have come from, what you are going to do. Hear what a Frenchman himself has to say on the subject.†

"There are in the Paris police at the present time 7,756, exclusive of *officiels* and gendarmes. These men are divided

* Sois mon frère, ou je te tue.

† M. Yves Guyot, Journalist, member of the Paris Municipal Council and Orator, in *La Police*, published by Charpentier et Cie, Paris, 1887.

into two distinct classes — *Gardiens de la Paix* and the *mouchards* or spies. They are both paid alike, that is, from 2,000 francs a year. But there is this difference, that the spies get a reward of 200 francs for capturing a murderer. Besides the two classes here named, there is a third class known as *Indicateurs*. This class is as secret and mysterious as the Inquisition, and its special functions are to keep an eye on the upper classes. When a crime has been committed, the *mouchards* are put on the trail to ferret out all that is to be learned. M. Guyot describes these men as being for the most part former officers of low grade in the army. They are, he says, crafty and unscrupulous, and walk into a room with the "sidelong motion of a crab." These delightful creatures are also employed to watch political "suspects," and they send in reports of all the gossip and slanders about them which they can pick up at the wine shops and doubtful places of resort. M. Guyot says that he himself has often been watched, and that he has read the reports that have been sent in about him. In these reports he is surprised to find that he has visited cafés that he knows nothing of, and language has been put into his mouth such as the *mouchards* use in the horrible slang they bandy between themselves. The author of this entertaining book goes on to relate that on one occasion he was defendant in some legal proceedings instituted against him for libel, he having stated in the press that *torture was practised in the prisons*. These statements on the trial were substantiated and corroborated by *fourteen* of the *mouchards*, who said that *there existed a custom of torturing prisoners awaiting trial in the police cells, in order to extort from them confessions of guilt*. The torture consisted in *tying twine round the wrists of the victims, and drawing it tightly, so as to cut the flesh and draw blood*. This torture is technically known as "*Passer au tabac*," the origin of which is not given.

Reader, pray do not forget that you are not reading a page of a work on Russia, but an extract from a book published in and having reference to highly-civilised France. I, for one, thank God that I can boast of being a brutal Saxon.

Proceeding with extracts from M. Guyot's work. What

do my countrymen think of this? On the 21st of December, 1879, a poor woman named Ninus, the wife of a mason, was arrested by one of these human vampires on a false charge of begging. For three days she was kept in close confinement, without being even allowed to state her case, or to represent to the Commissary of Police of the district that her *infant* child was dying at home for want of nourishment; and the child did die. The police authorities did not deny that the poor woman was unjustly accused, or that she was kept in prison for three days; but they sent their police-surgeon down to the woman's house to examine the body of the child, and he reported that the infant had died of disease.

One would like to know how much he was paid for that report.

M. Guyot goes on to cite hundreds of other cases in which persons have been arrested and subjected to indignities without the slightest apparent excuse, at the will of the horrible mouchards. During 1882, 46,457 arrests were made by the police in Paris, and of this vast number only 1,502 were made by virtue of warrants regularly obtained. No fewer than 5,618 were arrested for "rebellion," which means resistance to the police. If a policeman knocks you down in Paris, and you get up again before he tells you, you would be resisting him, and he would arrest you.

Any one who lives in "garnis" (furnished apartments) may be visited by the mouchards at any hour of the night, and without any prior warning. Think of it mothers who have daughters.

All the hotels are under the abominable system of espionage, and a landlord who doesn't render an account of all his visitors every night to the bureau of the police, is heavily fined. The common lodging-houses are the happy hunting-grounds of the mouchards. They make raids upon these places, capture whole bands of people, and drag them before the Commissary at the police-station. Here they are scrutinised, and those who are wanted are detained; while the others are released after some inquiry has been made about them. The mouchards get five francs for every previous offender who is convicted of fresh offence, however trivial; and so it will be understood why they

throw such a large net. M. Guyot, who was formerly a Prefect of Police, states that in no city in Europe is there so large a number of arrests as in Paris, for the reason that in no other city is there so little scruple in making them. So much for the mouchards.

Here is another interesting little extract, also taken from *La Police*. "On the 17th August, 1883, M. Guyot says that the following details appeared in the columns of *La Lanterne* :—" An American family, consisting of Mr. Theodore Hine, an American, his wife, and a friend, had been residing for some days at the Hôtel Mars, in the Rue de Croissant. One day, at noon, Mr. Heine, who was an invalid, went out for a stroll to purchase some cigars at a shop in the neighbourhood. He did not return, and, despite the energetic researches and inquiries immediately instituted by his family to ascertain what had become of him, no trace of the missing man could be found. Suddenly, after an absence of many days, Mr. Heine walked into the room occupied by his almost frantic wife, and had a marvellous tale to tell. When he had purchased his cigars, he endeavoured to find his way back to his hotel. Becoming perplexed among the labyrinth of streets, and unable to speak a word of French, he found himself in the Avenue de St. Ouen. Worn out by fatigue, he tried to get information from some passers-by as to the situation of his hotel. The first man whom he addressed vouchsafed no reply. His repeated endeavours to find some one who could speak English—rather a hopeless task, by the bye, when French ouvriers have to be dealt with—ended by making him the centre and butt of a group of grinning *badauds*, who regarded him as a madman, simply because he could not speak French. Presently two Gardiens de la Paix came along, and noticing a crowd round the unfortunate American indolently set themselves to inquire what was the matter. The policemen had no more idea of the language Mr. Heine was talking than the rest of the crowd; and believing, with ready alacrity, that he was a madman or an imbecile, they arrested him, and carried him to the nearest police-station. Thence he was conducted, notwithstanding his protests in English, to the Prefecture de Police, when, incredible as it may appear, not a single man could be found who could

speaking any language but French. No one thought of procuring an interpreter, and Mr. Heine was not allowed to send a note away to his wife. From the Prefecture he was taken to the lunatic asylum at Sainte Anne, where he was treated as a madman, until at last his name was published in the list of insane persons maintained at public expense, and this led to his release."

The above reads almost like a romance, but remember it happened not a year ago, and in highly-civilised Paris. M. Guyot, who quotes this case *in extenso* in his book, waxes very indignant, proving that there is at least one honest and one honourable man in France. And he says: "Here was an American gentleman, who spoke in a language that was neither Chinese nor Korean—which any one may be pardoned for being ignorant of—but English, a tongue widely diffused over the whole surface of the globe. Passing through the hands of hundreds of people, Mr. Heine could not find any one to understand him. There are medical men of eminence attached to the Prefecture de Police. These eminent men had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the man was mad. When he was discovered by his friends, instead of hastening to make apologies to a maltreated foreigner, the police authorities refused at first to give him up. Intellectually, the police showed that they were on an equality with M. Camescasse, their chief."

A powerful London journal* commenting upon the above case, says:—

"The moral of this startling narrative is that nothing can be more dangerous than for a foreigner to visit Paris at present, unless he can speak French. The gay city upon the Seine, according to an interesting article which has just appeared in the new number of the *Edinburgh Review*, on a book called 'The Anarchy of Paris,' by Maxime du Camp, is far from a safe or agreeable residence to any one, whether foreigner or habitual inhabitant, who makes his way late at night through the Champs Elysées, or even along the boulevards. An Englishman, named Grisewood, has good reasons to remember the rough treat-

* *Daily Telegraph*, January 16, 1884.

ment he experienced, not long since, at the hands of the Parisian police, because he interfered on behalf of an old woman who was being hustled and maltreated by the gendarmes. Mr. Grisewood, like many of his compatriots, could not speak French ; the result being that he was locked up in a cell in company with some of the greatest vagabonds and scoundrels in Paris, and detained for thirty hours before he was released. So arbitrary and high-handed, indeed, are the proceedings habitually resorted to at present by the employés of M. Camescasse, that, if we are to believe M. Guyot, it is doubtful whether a fair acquaintance with the French language would rescue any foreigner from their clutches without his experiencing all sorts of indignities at their hands."

Of the *gardiens de la paix*, I do not hesitate to say they are the most brutal and cowardly police in the civilised world. They are never seen alone, but always in pairs. If there is a row or a fight, they never show up until it is all over. At night they skulk in doorways, and smoke and sleep. Occasionally they outrage women and arrest men, only letting them go on the payment of a sum of money.

Such is Paris—dear, delightful, gay, pleasure-loving Paris !

As one reads of these things he is disposed to say that with such foul blots as these upon her face, it would be well for France to draw a veil over herself, and assume a modesty and honesty, though she has them not ; instead of rising up, with the effrontery and hypocrisy of a brazen harlot, to cry "shame" against her neighbour's sins, when her own sins are as scarlet wool.

CHAPTER VIII.

Justice in France, how it is Mocked and Burlesqued—The Marquis de Ray—The Charenton Murder—The Sentimentality of French Jurors—A Shameful Case in Nice—Napoleon's *Mot*—"The French have no Civic Courage"—The Bad Drainage of Paris—Failure of the Water Supply—Absinthe and Eau de Vie—The Awful Drunkenness of France—The Suicides.

JUSTICE in France, when it is not a burlesque is generally a mockery, while equity would seem to be a thing unknown; at any rate, so far as foreigners are concerned. It would almost seem as if this was a natural result of the barbarous police system. For there can hardly be justice when any number of the horrible mouchards can be bought for a few francs to swear away a person's life or liberty. It seems almost beyond credence, and yet it is nevertheless true that these creatures have been known to enter into a conspiracy to extort money from respectable women by threatening to bring charges against them of having committed acts *contre les mœurs*. And scores of women of stainless character have to submit to this system of blackmailing. That such a monstrous state of matters as this should exist is not at all surprising when it is remembered that the vile mouchards are recruited from the criminal classes. In fact it would appear as if a man's best credential for the post of mouchard is that of having been convicted of some crime. These mouchards belong to what is known as the Service of Surety. It was founded in 1817, and a returned convict, named Vidocq, was placed at its head. Every one of his subordinates was a criminal like himself, and so powerful did this body become, and so frightful was the mischief they caused that they were disbanded in 1833. Soon after, however, it was re-formed, but on a different basis, and a better class of men was procured, a law being passed *that no felon should be eligible for service*. This law would now seem to have fallen into *desuetude*, and it is certain that a discharged prisoner may obtain employment as a mouchard. The idea of being a spy is looked upon with such repugnance by most people,

that no man, who was not entirely dead to honour, would accept such a post as that of mouchard. In addition to the recognised mouchards, every *concierger* in France is a paid agent of the police, and added to them, again, is the large body of gendarmerie, numbering many thousands. So what with gendarmes, mouchards, indicateurs, gardiens de la paix, and the concierges, one may form some idea how much liberty there is in that boasted land of freedom. And, then, when we consider the venal magistracy, and the low class from which jurors are generally drawn, it is not difficult to understand how the purity of justice may be corrupted. I do not mean to assert that there are not honest and upright judges on the bench ; but the small fry of magistrates who generally obtain their posts by nepotism and who are wretchedly ill-paid, are corrupt and partial, and one has only to study French law cases for a little while to know how frequently justice is mocked and burlesqued. In proof of this I will cite a very recent case—the trial of the Marquis de Ray. This old, hypocritical scoundrel announced that for the honour and glory of God he was going to form a French Colony at Port Breton, on one of the South Sea Islands. By mixing with his circulars and advertisements any number of pious expressions he succeeded in entrapping thousands of his luckless countrymen and women, who subscribed enormous sums of money. These poor people were sent away in rotten ships, with scarcely any provisions ; and those who survived the horrors of the voyage were landed on a cannibal island. Scores of them were killed and eaten by the savages : many went raving mad, and others died of horrible diseases. Whole families, representing two and three generations, were swept off ; and the few who did survive were utterly ruined. The Marquis de Ray did all this in the name and to the honour and glory of God. The trial of the villain who was the author of these fearful horrors lasted several days, and resulted in a verdict of *five years' imprisonment*, and as the sentence did not carry with it the penalty of *travaux forcés* the Marquis de Ray will be able to do much as he likes as long as he does not break the prison rules ; but even these will always yield to golden keys, and as the delightful old gentleman has, no doubt, feathered his nest pretty well out

of the millions of francs his dupes subscribed, he will find no difficulty in making himself very comfortable.

Any lawyer, who is an eloquent pleader and a good actor, and knows how to make frequent and skilful reference to the "Bon Dieu," may, to a certainty succeed either in getting his client off or having "extenuating circumstances" tacked on to the verdict, which sometimes means an acquittal, and at all times a mitigation of punishment. A fiendish woman, who has poured a bottle of vitriol over the face of her faithless lover, has only to fall to weeping before the jury, who weep in response and let her off.

*Apr*opos of this one will remember the good story of the young man who was put upon his trial for having brutally killed his father and mother. When asked if he had any extenuating circumstances to offer against his being condemned to death, he immediately broke into tears and appealed to the jury to pity him as he was a *poor orphan*. This was too much for the sentimental jury, who fell upon each others necks and wept, and appended a rider to their verdict of "extenuating circumstances," and the good young man was let off.

This morbid sentimentality of the French nature is, as everybody knows, a reality, and frequently causes justice to be burlesqued. A case in evidence is the trial last year of Madame Fenreyon and her husband for the so-called Charenton murder. For depravity, for cold-bloodedness, and ghastly horror, this murder stands out as one of the most diabolical in the annals of crime.

Madame Fenreyon, in common with her countrywomen, had a lover in addition to her husband. For a long time she carried on a disgraceful intrigue with the lover until, growing tired of him, she resolved to murder him, and, to that end, took her husband and his brother into her confidence. A plot was hatched. A lonely house at Charenton was hired near the river, and, on an appointed night, the unsuspecting lover was invited by his mistress to a *café* in Paris to supper; and, from thence, they proceeded to Charenton, though, before starting, the female fiend went to a church and prayed for half-an-hour. This was strong hypocrisy, albeit it was French. On entering the lonely house, where the husband and the brother were

in waiting, and to which the wretched woman had lured her victim, she actually held him while her husband beat his brains out with a hammer; and, as he lay upon the floor in the agonies of death, the brother stabbed him several times with a knife. The body was then stripped, doubled up, bound round with a quantity of leaden piping, placed in a wheelbarrow, and trundled to the river close at hand, and pitched in, to be fished out some weeks later by chance by some boatmen. The crime was traced to the two men and the woman. They were put upon their trial, which lasted several days, and they engaged the best of counsel to defend them. The whole tragedy was unravelled in all its hideous details; the men confessed their crime in open court, and so did the woman, telling every atom of the shameful story. The trial resulted in a verdict of guilty. The husband was condemned to death; the woman—owing to the feelings of the jury being wrought upon through the artfulness of counsel—got life imprisonment; and the brother, “on account of his youth,” poor boy! only got a short term. Counsel, however, was not satisfied, and he set to work to find a flaw in the indictment. It is never difficult to find flaws in French indictments, if you have money and influence enough. So the necessary flaw was found; the prisoners were re-tried; the death sentence was reversed; the brother was acquitted; but the sentence on the woman was allowed to remain undisturbed.

Now, if this was not a burlesque of justice, then justice was never burlesqued in this world. The crime was ghastly even for France; and all Paris, used as it is to such things, was a little shocked, and everybody expected that both husband and wife would have been executed, as they ought to have been. But the result was as I have stated. The man has been sent to New Caledonia, where, I believe, his wife will be allowed to join him. In a year or two, when their friends have sent them enough money, they will distribute it amongst the sentries, a boat will be placed ready for them, and they will make their way to Australia, and I wish our kinsmen there joy of them.

About a year and a-half ago, an English gentleman of the highest respectability was living at Nice, occupying a

villa on the Promenade des Anglais. His house was surrounded with a garden that was shut off from the road by a railing and an iron gate. One afternoon, as he was walking in his garden enjoying a cigar, some men came to the gate and demanded admission. He asked who they were and what they wanted. They refused to give him any particulars of themselves, and he very properly refused to admit them. Whereupon they forced the gate and entered his grounds. With the spirit of a true Briton, he turned the blackguards out again; but again they forced themselves in, and then, announcing themselves *agents de police*, dragged the astonished Englishman off to prison.

Reader, you don't happen to know, perhaps, what a loathsome, repulsive black hole the prison of Nice is. If you did you would not be surprised that the English gentleman, in spite of protests and offers to deposit any amount of money as bail, his numerous friends making the same offers, who passed the night there, spoke of that night as one that could not have been endured a second time. He was subsequently put upon his trial, and after any amount of false swearing, in which our dear neighbours are adepts, he was fined five hundred francs (£20), besides all the costs of the trial.

If this was not a mockery of justice, then there never was a mockery in this world.*

But here is another piece of evidence as to how justice is burlesqued in France. A woman named Amélie Sangle had married a young wood-turner last June, but had since separated from him. She afterwards met one of her husband's companions, named Delinon, and asked him the former's address, as she wished to return to him. Delinon refused to give it, whereupon Madame Sangle bought a bottle of vitriol, and again urged him to acquaint her where she could find her husband. On his still refusing, she threw the contents of the bottle over him, covering his face with vitriol, and disfiguring his features in a horrible

* The case here alluded to was fully reported in the English Journal published at Nice, the *Anglo-American*, edited by Mr. Lemerrier. It was also mentioned by many English papers, including, I believe, the *World*. It caused a great scandal in Nice, and many good families left through it; while every one pronounced 'it disgraceful even for France.

manner, causing him to lose both sight and hearing. At the trial, the woman avowed that she adored her husband, and being jealous of Delinon's influence over him, acted as she did in a fit of ungovernable rage. Notwithstanding the brutal character of the crime, the jury acquitted the prisoner.*

Should any one think that I have been guilty of exaggeration in this chapter, I beg to refer them to M. Guyot's book, *La Police*. This gentleman is a credit and honour to his country, and, with astonishing fearlessness, thereby proving the exception to Napoleon the First's *mot*.—"The French have no civic courage,"† he has dragged the mask from the French police system, and proved it to be as relentless, as cruel, as barbarous and unjust as that of Russia. Our good neighbours are never tired of denouncing the crimes and government of London. It seems to give them an especial delight; and when a murder is committed in the World's Metropolis the French Press shrieks itself into hysterics, and the "innate and ferocious brutality" of the English is harped upon until the string is threadbare. But we in England do not hear of French murders unless they happen to be unusually atrocious, such as the Troppman and Charenton cases. This is no doubt due to the fact that the French Press generally does not publish police and murder cases as our own Press does. There is no daily "Police Column" in a French paper. But there happens to be published in Paris a sheet called *Le Petit Journal*. Few Englishmen probably, unless living in Paris, have ever heard of it. It has been in existence twenty-two years, its price is one sou, and it is said to circulate 600,000 daily. It is facetiously called the "Murderer's Chronicle." It makes a speciality of reporting crime, and its columns daily teem with the most revolting and ghastly details of murder, vitriol-throwing, and certain other crimes which must be nameless here, but in which the French are, *par excellence*, adepts. These sort of crimes are politely called in France *Contre les Mœurs*. *Verb. sap.*

* This case was tried in Paris on January 25, present year.

† In the instructions to his Ministers at the time of the Walcheren Expedition. Thiers' *Consulate and Empire*, Book 36.

Since our good friends cannot manage their own poor little gimcrack city, with only 2,000,000 inhabitants, what would they do with London? I give here the Registrar-General's report on the last census. He points out that the population of London has almost exactly doubled itself in the course of forty-one years, whereas the population of the rest of England has taken fifty-seven years to multiply in an equal degree. At the beginning of the present century, out of every nine inhabitants of England and Wales one only lived in London. Now the proportion has risen to one out of seven. In the outer ring of suburbs and environs not included within the limits of inner London, yet only separated from it by an arbitrary line, the growth has been still more rapid—its population having increased $50\frac{1}{2}$ in the last decennial period, and even a fraction more than that in the preceding one.

Again, Sir Joseph Bazalgette said, at the Institution of Civil Engineers the other day, and referring to the gigantic size and marvellous growth of London, that the British Metropolis has the area of a small German State, and a population equal to that of Holland, greater than that of Scotland, double that of Denmark. Taking the outer ring as well, or that vast province of houses known as "Greater London," we have a population not much less than that of Ireland or Belgium, which is being increased every year by large numbers of human beings from other cities, foreign and English. This eminent engineer further said that the healthiness of the Metropolis was increasing and its death-rate falling. This is very significant; and it is an undeniable fact, as borne out by statistics, that the English capital far surpasses Paris in every respect—as a resort of fashion, as a centre of commerce, politics, and fame. Even outwardly Paris is dwarfed by London in splendour as in size. Paris is poor and flimsy as compared with our capital, and the glorious dream of the late Lord Beaconsfield to make London the centre-point, the very heart of Europe, is fully realised.

Now let us look at Paris. Its veneering of gilt is so thin that you have only to scratch it to get at the rottenness beneath. Of all the great capitals of Europe it is one of the worst drained, and it is a notorious fact that two or

three weeks of hot weather is sufficient to raise the death-rate to an appalling height. The mean average death-rate under any circumstances is always higher than London. It is true that beneath Paris is an elaborate system of drainage-works, through which a small car is run with curious sight-seers, but the system is confessedly defective. Then again, nothing could be worse than the water-supply. The water itself is bad and the supply deficient. After three weeks of hot weather in the summer of 1880 the supply almost entirely failed. The whole population was put on half measure, the streets were left unwatered, and the drains were unflushed. As a natural consequence, the atmosphere was unbearable, the mortality was frightful, and everybody who could fled from the pestilential city. At the present day crime in Paris is also higher than in London, when the total population is considered. Outrages even on the Boulevards are very frequent ; while it is absolutely dangerous to pass along the Champs Elysées, or, in fact, any quiet and secluded place after a certain hour. For a long time, up to a few weeks ago, the Bois de Boulogne was infested by a gang of roughs, who robbed and murdered every one they could lay hands on. So frequent were these crimes that a little army of gendarmes were one night marched to the Bois, round which they drew a cordon, and succeeded in capturing about twelve desperadoes. But notwithstanding this, the Bois is so unsafe, that it is now nightly patrolled by a large body of gendarmes.

In the low quarters of Paris crimes of the most frightful nature are committed daily. The amount of drunkenness is awful ; so bad has it become, that a law was recently passed making it a punishable offence, in the hope that it might operate as a check, though statistics prove that as yet it has not done so. Absinthe and *eau de vie* are the common drinks. The former is the most villanous stuff that can be drunk. It maddens and kills quickly by bringing on softening of the brain, and it also produces a form of madness called in French *folie paralytique*.* This complaint is peculiar to drunkards, and increases at a fearful rate.† The

* *Annuaire de l'Economie, Politique et de la Statistique.* Paris : Guillaume et Cie. 1883.

† *Ibid.*

eau de vie is made from the commonest of methylated spirits. It is a fiery, maddening spirit, and is sold at from *forty to eighty centimes* the litre (a little more than a pint). Our London gin is a mild and pleasant drink compared with this *eau de vie*. Go into the poor quarters of Paris ;—peep into a low café, a buvette, a cabaret, a guinguette, an estaminet, a brasserie ;—look at the awful, bloated faces, sodden and distorted out of all semblance to God's image by absinthe and *eau de vie* ;—look at the half-naked women and the young children soaking themselves with these cursed drinks :—if you are a brutal Saxon, you will shudder and come away with an aching heart, and thank your God that London, with all its appalling horrors, is not so bad as Paris.

At the present time, when France has so much to say about our own crime, she is pouring into New Caledonia 5,000 criminals a year. In Paris the gaols are over-crowded, and the madhouses teem with the victims of drink. Then as to the suicides—another favourite theme for our neighbours to taunt us with. The suicides in Paris are double in number those of London on the population. The returns for 1883 give these figures. The total number was 542, or 63 increase on the preceding year ; 217 was by fire-arms, 148 by drowning, 81 by hanging, 37 by charcoal in a closed room, while the remaining 51 are classed as jumping from heights, by poison, or by placing themselves in front of street wagons or railway trains. Since 1827, throughout France the suicides have shown a steady annual increase. In that year they were 5 per 10,000 inhabitants ; while in 1880 they had risen to 17 per 10,000.*

As regards the pauperism in Paris, I have already shown, by M. Haussonville's figures, that it is much higher than in London, and that during the last thirty years it has remained stationary in Paris and decreased six per cent. in the British metropolis.

* *Annuaire de l'Economie, Politique et de la Statistique*, page 217.

CHAPTER IX.

A French Bedroom, Salle à Manger, Cuisine—Home Life—The Lady and her Daughters—A French Idea of Pleasure—Late Hours—Chicory—Coffee—French Wine. How it is Adulterated—The French Habit of Spitting into a Tumbler at the Dinner Table—French Politeness: Where is it? In a Frenchman's Hat!

WE have been accused in "La Rue à Londres" of not knowing what comfort is. We can, of course, well afford to laugh at the accusation. But let us see what French home-life is like, and how much comfort there is in it,—remarking, *en passant*, that in the French language there is no equivalent for our word "home," the nearest approach to it being *en famille*.

We will begin with a bedroom of a typical, fairly well-to-do class. The bedstead is a narrow, massive wooden structure, with wooden sides, against which a stranger is bound to break his shins every time he gets in and out. A massive spring mattress, dome-shaped; on the top of this is placed a *matelas* of wool or horsehair. This accommodating itself to the dome-shaped mattress, the occupant of the bed is compelled to lie on the top of an *arrête*, as it were. The bolster is round, like a rolling-pin, and just as hard. On the top of this again is placed a tremendous square pillow, so that the sleeper, no matter what position he lies in, always has a kink in his body. In the day-time this bed is all covered with a fancy, and often costly, coverlet. But when the *femme de chambre* goes up to prepare the bed for the night, she removes this coverlet and carefully folds it up; and the bed-clothing then consists of a small, miserably poor counterpane and a square bag stuffed with feathers or down. Now, it is a moral certainty that this bag will not keep on all night, as it is sure to slip off with the movements of the sleeper. The consequence is, in cold weather one is constantly waking up half-frozen. Then, in addition to this annoyance, he is surrounded by massive curtains, which add to the general discomfort. If there happens to be a fireplace in the room, it is certain to have

a board in front, and the chimney will be stuffed up with rags, for next to his dislike for soap and water, a Frenchman has a horror of fresh air. Before the windows are heavy curtains, and all the crevices of the sash are bound round with list. The floor is bare, with the exception of what is called a *descente de lit*, but which we call a hearthrug. This is placed alongside of the bed. There is a cumbersome *garde-robe*, or wardrobe, a chest of drawers with a marble top, on which stand a slop-basin and a jug holding half a pint of water; while hanging on a rail at the side of the drawers is a *serviette de toilette* of about the size of a large pocket-handkerchief. The mirror is hung on the wall, and opposite the light, so that the difficulty is to see oneself. Of course there are a few chairs, and possibly a print or two on the walls. I have here depicted a good class of bedroom; an inferior one is the acme of cold, barren discomfort.

Descending (or perhaps the rooms are all on one floor) into the *salle à manger*, we find the same cheerlessness as in the bedroom. However cold the weather, it is ten to one against there being a fire, for, though a Frenchman does not mind what he spends in gratifying his vanity, and decorating himself and family out in fine clothes and jewels, he will spend very little on the internal comfort of his dwelling. The floor of the eating-room has no carpet. There is a long table with massive legs, and ranged round this are stiff-looking, straight-backed chairs. The *salon*, which is *always* a show-room, is repulsive in its flaunted gaudiness, and it is suggestive in every way of the show-room of a furniture shop. There are gaudy chairs with much gilt; rugs on the floor, what-nots, small tables, a couch or two, some plants, a great deal of *bric-à-brac*, a crowd of things on the mantelpiece; some engravings, not always in good taste, unless the owner is rich, when, in lieu of engravings, there will be oil-paintings. This room is invariably vulgar in its ostentatious display, and so stiff, so formal is everything, that one is afraid to move. The *salon* is never used for any other purpose but to receive visitors. There is another room, a little less stiff, but equally comfortless, where will be found a piano and a few books, and the indispensable pack or packs of cards, for no

French house is complete without playing-cards. The atmosphere of this room is always very oppressive with stale tobacco-smoke and want of ventilation. But, in point of fact, this want is common all over the house, for a Frenchman thinks that it is flying in the face of Providence to open windows or doors. The kitchen, or *cuisine*, is conspicuous by its bad smells, its great array of copper utensils, and its gas, charcoal, or wood fire, and closed stove. In all French kitchens there is the absence of that cleanliness we are accustomed to look for, and everything is untidy and slovenly.

So much for the furnishing. Now for the style of life that is led.

If the master of the house goes out early to business, he comes down into the *salle-à-manger*, the table of which is bare of cloth, and the servant brings him a bowl of what is by a pleasant fiction termed coffee. And here I must have a word to say about the boasted French coffee.

It has long been a tradition with us that you must go to France for good coffee. There never was a greater mistake. As a matter of fact, the coffee that one generally gets in France is wretched, and very frequently not coffee at all, but a mixture of three parts of chicory and one part of burnt beans; unless it happens to be made—as is frequently the case—from a vile composition called “Essence of Coffee.” The amount of chicory that is consumed in France is absolutely enormous, while the proportion of coffee is comparatively small. The very best coffee in the world goes to the English market. That which finds its way into France is an inferior quality, with some rare exceptions. The difference between us and our neighbours is, that we are not so much a coffee-drinking people, and the majority of English people don’t know how to make coffee properly. On the other hand, French people have no idea how to make tea.

Returning to the master of the house and his bowl of coffee and milk—*café au lait*. A hunk of bread is brought to him, and this he proceeds to tear up—that is the only way one can describe the process. The pieces he dips into the coffee, and, having protected his shirt-front—for a Frenchman is very particular about his shirt-front—with a

napkin as big as one of our ordinary towels, he proceeds to feed himself, eating and drinking with a rapidity that is simply amazing. This "first breakfast" is a very short affair, and, being over, the worthy man goes out with a cigarette in his mouth; and the strong probabilities are he will not turn up again until three or four o'clock in the morning, as he will go to a café for his *déjeuner* and dinner.

A little later the lady of the house and her daughters, if there are any, make their appearance, looking very yellow and washed out, for it is likely they did not go to bed until long after midnight. Their hair is screwed up in papers; they are attired in faded, and as often as not ragged, *robes de chambre*, and they wear slippers down at the heels. Being tired and weary, they soak their bread in their coffee in silence, or, being in bad tempers, grumble at each other, unless they happen to be discussing with zest the immoral play they witnessed at the theatre the preceding evening. When they have finished their coffee, they return to their bedrooms, and wash themselves in the half-pint of water. Then they spend from two to three hours before the looking-glass, and by the time *déjeuner* is ready they are looking *blooming*, thanks to the marvellous French "toilet requisites." The *déjeuner* is a formidable affair, but not to be compared to the dinner. Possibly some visitors have dropped in, and the babel of voices is deafening. French ladies generally have harsh, treble voices, and, as they speak in the highest key and all speak together, the noise is confusing. Many courses are gone through, and an immense quantity of wretched wine is drunk, which in three cases out of five is manufactured from dried raisins.* As evidence of the quantity of wine that is consumed by the people, the returns for last year showed two hectolitres twenty-seven litres per head in Paris,† that is, about fifty

* *Annuaire de l'Economie Politique*, page 420.

† An enormous quantity of manufactured wine is sold in France. Both this and the common vin ordinaire is frequently adulterated with plaster of Paris, which gives it a "body" and a bright colour. This adulteration was carried on to such an extent, that a law was recently passed limiting the quantity of plaster to be used.

Last year there were manufactured in France 1,700,000 hectolitres of wine, being composed of a basis of common wine, with the addition of sugar and water; and 2,500,000 hectolitres from dried raisins.--*Annuaire de l'Economie Politique*, page 288.

gallons per year each person—man, woman, and child. The breakfast being over, black coffee is handed round. The gentlemen smoke cigarettes, and the ladies munch bon-bons. The afternoon is got through somehow, visiting or shopping. Visitors are generally entertained hospitably on wretchedly weak tea, some biscuits, and bon-bons. Then comes the event of the day—*dîner*. That is a prodigious meal. If there happens to be company, the ladies appear more blooming than ever. Their complexions are fresh and youthful ; the hair is artfully arranged to the best advantage ; and Madame or Mademoiselle crowds on to her fingers, and round her neck, and in her ears, and on her bosom, all the jewellery she possesses, and that is generally a great deal, for a French lady worships jewellery first and her God afterwards, and she will have it somehow or another—gold, if possible, but if not, then the best imitation. Two hours or more are spent over the dinner, and the quantity that is eaten and drunk is almost beyond credence by a stranger to French habits. As a rule, there is only one knife and fork for all the courses, fish, flesh, and fowl. The fork is only used to hold the meat until it is cut in pieces ; then it is laid on one side, and everything is lifted up on the knife and put into the mouth. When the plate is empty, it is wiped and polished with a piece of bread, which is eaten ; for a French person likes to see his or her plate go away perfectly clean. The dinner being ended, glasses of water are brought round. In these the napkin is dipped, and the fingers and lips wiped ; then the gentlemen, and frequently the ladies, rinse their mouths out and spit the water into the glass on the table. This kind of French etiquette may be seen at any time in any café in France, where the class I am describing frequent. After this pleasant little operation of mouth-washing, black coffee and cognac is passed round. The gentlemen, sometimes the ladies, smoke. Then there is a little music, perhaps some singing, until it is time to go to the theatre, concert, ball, or what not ; and then really commences the Frenchman's day. At some time after midnight the bourgeois family I have described are supping in a café—another prodigious meal. The ladies are at their best. They look charming, and they are brimming over with good

spirits. They laugh immoderately and talk loudly, but they are thoroughly light-hearted. They are there to enjoy themselves ; and they do. At three or four o'clock they go home to their cold, cheerless, foetid house ; and at first breakfast-time appear, as I have said, looking yellow, and weary, and worn.

The above is a fair representation of home life as we find it in France amongst the middle classes. If you descend in the social scale, the homes are barren and wretched. The French *ouvrier's* home is very much worse than the same class in England. Of comfort, as we are pleased to think we understand it, there is absolutely none. All is foetid—dirty—squalid. His diet for the most part consists of cabbage soup, common bread, a great deal of garlic, with sausages now and again, and pork whenever he can afford it. When he has finished his dinner, he puts on his blouse and goes to a *café*, where he smokes a great deal of villanous tobacco, plays cards or dominoes, and saturates himself with absinthe.

If we ascend in the social scale to the first-class families, we find magnificence, ostentation, lavishness, but no comfort,—absolutely none. The one great aim of a Frenchman's life, if he have money, is to let the world know that he has got it. He is always at the greatest pains to impress you with a sense of his importance. He flaunts his wealth in your face in every conceivable way. He patronises you and sits upon you ; and, so powerful is his vanity, that if you are a stranger he will take you over his house, or rather so much of it as is on show, and point out everything with the delight of a child displaying its new clothes. He will tell you with keen joy how many thousands of francs he paid for his wife's diamonds, and what his pictures cost, and how much his horses and carriages stood him in. If he invites you to dinner, you will be overawed by the glittering display of plate ; but the cold formality and want of cheeriness will make you very uncomfortable. A French dinner is always a long and very noisy affair ; and it justifies the caustic remark, that "A Frenchman feeds, he doesn't dine."

There is one other subject with which I must deal in this chapter, namely, "French politeness."

A literary friend of mine wittily remarked, "A Frenchman's politeness consisted of taking off his hat and putting it on again." That expresses an absolute truth, for French politeness goes no deeper. Go and stand at a busy corner where 'busses and tramcars start from, and watch Frenchmen rudely elbow women and children away in order that they themselves may secure the best seats. If it is a wet day and Monsieur is asked if he will accommodate a lady, watch him how he will scowl at the conductor and refuse to budge an inch. Go to a railway station on a fête day, and watch Frenchmen behaving more like animals than men, and you will come away with a different idea about French politeness. Would a polite people have treated King Alphonso as he was treated in Paris the other day? Would a polite people have acted with such coarse rudeness to the Marquis Tseng as the French have done? Would a polite people have treated our own courteous and chivalric Captain Johnston as the boorish Admiral Pierre did? Do you find politeness in the post-office when you go for stamps or to transact other business, and some dirty, garlic-smelling clerk puffs his cigarette smoke towards you, and keeps you waiting while he finishes the conversation he was engaged in with another garlic-smelling clerk as you entered? Do you find it amongst the officials of railways? Do you find it on board the steamboats, in the theatres, in the tramcars? If not in any of these places, then where is it? It is, as my literary friend expressed it, in a Frenchman's hat. There, and there only, is it to be found.

CHAPTER X.

French Soldiers—Officers : their Ignorance and Brutality—Barracks : their Unwholesomeness and Dirt—The *morale* of the Army—The Duke of Wellington's Reply to Louis XVIII.—The Franco-Prussian War—The French scared by Bogus Soldiers—The Disgrace of Sedan.

SOME years ago I was dining with a party of German officers at the "Maison Rouge," in Strasbourg. The conversation naturally took its tone from recent exciting events, and an officer in a cavalry regiment that had conspicuously distinguished itself exclaimed, in answer to a remark that had been made :—

"Ah ! if Frenchmen had only stopped at home, and armed their women instead, and sent them against us we should never have got into Paris."

This was the German's way of expressing his admiration for French women and contempt for the French soldiers.

I was particularly reminded of that remark recently on reading some articles in *Le Temps* on the British Army, in which the British soldier is held up to contempt, and the British officer is ridiculed as a nincompoop without brains, without military knowledge, and no skill. These articles, of course, are written by hack writers, to pander to the Anglophobic tastes now raging. Their bad taste and untruthfulness one can excuse. History proves that the English soldier has always been a match, and more than a match, for the Frenchman, therefore we need not trouble ourselves much about the opinions of *Le Temps*. But, naturally, one's attention is directed to the French Army, to see in what way it is so superior to our own, save in point of numbers. German contempt for the French army is well known, while in all ages the French soldier has been conspicuous for his unsparing brutality in war time. This, perhaps, is not to be wondered at, when it is remembered from what class the rank and file are drawn.

Napoleon I. said, "The worse the man, the better the soldier ; if soldiers be not corrupt, they must be made so."*

* Thiers, *Consulate and Empire*, Book 36.

This exactly expresses the ruling principle of the French army.

I find that in 1881 about $13\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the French army could not read or write ; $2\frac{1}{2}$ could read only ; while $57\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. had the rudimentary elements of instruction.*

The average French soldier is conspicuous for two things : his slovenliness and his dress, which outrages every taste. If my experience goes for anything, I should say he is the worst-dressed soldier in Europe. He is wretchedly paid.† He is badly fed and badly housed. His food is coarse and meagre in the piping times of peace. In war time it is indescribable. As for comfort in his barracks, it is utterly unknown ; and the same may be said for cleanliness. I visited a barracks in Paris not long ago, and two others in the South of France still more recently ; and in each case I was sickened and disgusted with the dirt and foetid atmosphere.

My French friends will accuse me, possibly, of having been over-sensitive ; but with some knowledge of barrack life in different countries, I am disposed to say that the French barrack is by far the worst. In fact, the ordinary French soldier is looked upon by his superior as an animal and nothing more ; with this difference, that, whereas an animal would be taken care of, and its comfort would be attended to, the soldier is utterly neglected in that respect. He is a fighting machine, and as such his soul must be ground out of him ; and he must be brutalised as much as possible, in order that he may become indifferent and pitiless. And when that dangerous condition has been fully developed, he is kept in rigid subjection by the chains of a tyrannical discipline, until the time comes to let him loose like a blood-thirsty animal. If space permitted, pages and pages might be filled with well-authenticated acts of brutality, recently, that are disgraceful to any nation calling itself civilised. Tunis, Madagascar, Tonkin, call up scenes that make one shudder. Supposing British troops had been guilty of any thing like the Hué massacre, as described by the China Correspondent of the Paris *Figaro*, would

* *Statistique Militaire : Annuaire de l'Economie Politique*, page 366.

† The pay for a common soldier is one sou a day.

not all France have uttered one great cry of condemnation ? But let us go back to the Franco-Prussian War, when we find the French soldier in all his barbaric fierceness. During that time he was guilty of excesses that almost rank with the worst periods of his history ; and the peasantry, inflamed by his savageness, joined him in his defiance of all laws of humanity. An exalted lady * saw a good deal of the French soldier and his officers during that dreadful time, and in one of her letters to her Queen-Mother she says :—

“A hundred French officers and two generals have broken their *parole*, and have escaped from their captivity. I doubt if a single one in the German army would have done anything like that. The French peasants—sometimes women—murder our soldiers in their beds, and they have often, and in many ways, fearfully ill-treated our wounded.”†

When barbarians fight, one does not expect to hear that they have shown mercy or given quarter ; but it is otherwise with so-called civilised troops. And yet, even in most recent times, the French troops, in dealing with uncivilised people, have proved themselves to be not a whit better than the armies of the first Napoleon. That excesses are to be looked for in time of war, no matter of what nationality the soldiers may be, is, alas ! too truly the case. But when it comes to killing the wounded, and showing no quarter to those who lay down their arms, one is aghast with horror, and his indignation cannot find words strong enough wherewith to express itself. But if we look at the French soldier and his surroundings as we find him to-day, there is no longer any room to wonder why he should become so blood-thirsty when the discipline and restraint are for the moment relaxed.

Between the French officer and the soldier there is little accord and less sympathy. The officer is vain, arrogant, and despotic ; and he seems to take an exquisite delight in making his power felt ; and the lower his grade the worse he is. Watch a squad of recruits drilling in any part of

* The late Princess Alice.

† “Letters of the Princess Alice.” Letter dated Darmstadt, January 7, 1870.

France, and witness the brutishness of the drill-sergeants, and you will no longer wonder why the men's worst passions are developed. The *morale* of the French army was always notoriously bad, and I do not think there are any signs of improvement. If you stand and watch a French regiment file past you in any town in France, you will be struck with many things,—amongst them, the slipshod slovenliness, the want of smartness, the ill-fitting clothes, and the large percentage of brutal, coarse faces. On this very subject hear what the Marseilles Correspondent of the leading German-Swiss newspaper has got to say:—

“Only a few weeks ago, as we were in the harbour of Marseilles, we saw the shipping of a troop of recruits. If the company had been intended for Caledonia it could not have looked more repulsive. In ragged clothing stood fellows of true gallows faces; men who, being outcasts from all decent society, and incapable of any honest labour, had enlisted.”*

As one reads the above, it is not difficult to understand how a massacre like that of Hué should be possible. It is true there were many sailors from the ships amongst the men who barbarously, and in cold blood, shot down the wretched Tonkinese as they fled from the city; but that only seems to me to make the matter worse.

I do not wish it to be supposed for a moment that I am underrating the many gallant deeds that are to be placed to the record of French soldiers and sailors. But I maintain that the material from which the French army is composed is the worst in the world, taken all round; and it really seems as if Napoleon's maxim, “If soldiers be not corrupt, they must be made so,” was closely followed at the present day. If we come now to look at the officers, we find that, as a body, they will not compare with English, German, or Russian officers. Their want of chivalry and politeness is as conspicuous by its absence now as it was in the time of Louis XVIII. When our own Duke of Wellington was Ambassador at Paris, during a *levée*, the French Marshals had the rudeness to turn their backs upon their old antago-

* *Der Bund*, January 18, 1884.

nist and retire. For this unpardonable breach of etiquette the king apologised to the duke, who replied—

“Don't distress yourself, sire; it is not the first time they have turned their backs upon me.”

This was terribly stinging, but it was deserved. It was the duke also who said, “When war is concluded, all animosity should be forgotten.” Now this is exactly what a French officer never does. His animosity is bitter and relentless, and he never seems capable of being able to appreciate either the valour or generosity of his enemy. This is a charge that their enemies have always brought against them; and the history of the Franco-Prussian war teems with evidence in support of it. It is a pity, for the sake of France herself, that there should be this feeling; but any one who knows what French pride is, and how unforgiving it is when wounded, will easily comprehend how this arises.

There is, perhaps, another reason that may in some measure account for the bad *morale* of the French army. The low-grade officers are wretchedly paid, and are generally half-educated men of no social standing. What is the result? That which ever follows ignorant men being placed in power—tyranny. I don't think the strongest partisan of France and her army would deny that there is an amount of petty tyranny of this nature exercised by the young officers of low grades that it would be impossible to find in any other European army. Where this goes on, the effect must necessarily be demoralising. Men who are tyrannised over lose respect for their superiors; and, when soldiers are concerned, it produces a want of *esprit de corps*, and there is friction. Now, any one who has the slightest knowledge of the French army of the present day will know that this is exactly the case, and in small garrison towns it is particularly conspicuous. Whatever Napoleon's view might have been as to the corrupting of soldiers who were not already corrupt, past experience proves that the higher the moral standard of the soldier the more amenable is he to discipline. Men even of the lowest type are very apt to be influenced by those with whom they come in contact; and refinement has a tendency to beget refinement. But the officers with whom I am dealing are quite lacking in this quality, as the wretched pay offers no inducement for a man to enrol himself under

the colours if he can get anything better. Perhaps it may be true that every soldier in France carries a marshal's bâton in his pocket, but it is equally true that not one out of a million ever comes to wield the bâton. As the army of France is at present constituted, it is not likely that young men of good families will be attracted to it; and there is no disputing the argument that without good officers you cannot have good men. If one looks for proof of the weak calibre of the average French officer, he need go no farther back than 1870. It is useless to mention Tunis, Madagascar, and Tonkin. The enemy in each of these cases has been no match for the power of France, but the world generally admits that these expeditions have, so far, only served to tarnish her former glory. In the year referred to, France had to compete with a very different foe, a foe in every way worthy of her steel. France poured forth her countless legions towards the Rhine; but they were incohesive masses; many of the officers appeared to be ignorant of even the rudimentary elements of military science. Their "Intelligence Department" was a farce; and the knowledge of the country through which they were travelling was practically *nil*. They had not the remotest idea of the position or numbers of the various sections of the German army; and I happen to know for a fact that in the Duchy of Baden, when the war broke out, there were so few soldiers, that dummies were dressed up and placed in rows to lead the French to believe there was a large force. Yet so supine, so badly-informed were these legions of France that, though they might have occupied the whole Duchy and thus have secured a foothold in the country they had gone forth to conquer, they were scared away by a few bogus helmets stuck on sticks. The French army was, in point of fact, a badly-officered rabble, with—except in certain cases—not the slightest *esprit de corps*. Had it been otherwise, what a different tale might have been told! for Germany was not ready,—her army had to be mobilised, her frontier towns were unprotected, and many of her fortresses were so weakly garrisoned that they must have succumbed to a vigorous onslaught. But if the French officers had been tyros in the art of war—and many of them were so—they could not have acted more foolishly. Frossard was airing

his vanity before Saarbrück; the town was his for the taking, but he did not move until too late. He struck at last, and planted the tri-colour where the Black Eagle had floated. But then came Spicheren,—that bloody prelude to a stupendous and ghastly drama. I have heard Germans who were present on that dreadful day say that Spicheren was lost to the French owing to the incompetency of the officers. In all the subsequent struggles in the smiling provinces of Alsace and Lorraine the same incompetency was shown. Matched with a mighty foe, France displayed to the onlooking world the pitiable weakness of her army. And so long as French officers continue what they are, so long will the army cease to rise above the level of a military rabble; and should our neighbours unhappily become involved in another great European struggle at no distant date, it does not need a prophet to predict that the great, unwieldy military machine would go to pieces as it did nearly fourteen years ago. Sedan was a disgrace, Metz was even a greater one. Said Marshal Soult at Waterloo, in speaking of the English, "They will die on the ground on which they stand before they lose it." Does France think—does France dare to say that if at Sedan and Metz they had been English instead of French soldiers, that those disgraceful surrenders would have taken place? Proudly and emphatically I exclaim *Never!* History and every nation except France echoes the word—"Never!"

Thursday, September 1, 1870, saw France crushed by an inferior number of troops; and 86,000 French soldiers and officers, besides 14,000 wounded, with 550 guns and 10,000 horses, surrendered to the valiant foe. On that day the glory of the French arms was dimmed, and the dimness has never passed away. A few weeks later, Bazaine threw up the sponge, with 3 marshals, 66 generals, 6,000 officers, and 173,000 men of all arms.

Oh, France! France! With such burning pages of disgrace as these in your history, why do you not hide your diminished head, and weep? But you will not do this. Your vanity is far too powerful to permit you to be humble, just, or generous. Your people are small in stature, and your average intelligence is far below that of your neighbours on the Rhine; but your consummate vanity has no counterpart amongst any people on the face of the globe.

CHAPTER XI.

The French Press: its Venality—*Le Temps* and London *Telegraph* contrasted—*Des Debats*—*Le Figaro*—*Le Clairon*—Press Laws—Fear of Actions for Libel—Want of Freedom.

NEXT to the venality of officialism, the French Press stands out as the most venal of French institutions. The one leading idea of a French newspaper seems to be to abuse some other paper. There is not an official clique, not a religious sect, not a group of tradesmen, not a body of wire-pullers, not a political rabble, but what has its representative organ. In most countries this would be looked upon as an advantage, but in France it is otherwise. The vanity of, and want of generosity in, the people will not allow them to look with complacency and goodwill on any rival. In the Press, this shows itself in such a venomous manner that foreigners are amazed. Then, again, newspaper honesty is almost unknown. I say almost, because there have been some notable exceptions. But how can honesty be expected from a Press that is hampered with such utterly absurd libel laws? As the nation itself has no freedom, but is overrun and kept in subjection by a barbarous system of *espionage*, so the Press is fettered and deprived of all liberty. If a man commits a robbery, or a woman commits adultery, and they figure in the criminal reports, it is certain, in mentioning them, that no paper will have the courage to do more than to refer to him or her by the initial letter of the name. Thus—"Le homme A." or "La femme B." The reason of this is, that the editor of the paper is afraid that the thief or the adulteress may bring an action against him. Then, as to the personal abuse I have alluded to, one has only to note the number of challenges that pass and the number of "meetings" that take place between French press-writers in the course of a year.

Monsieur le Rédacteur en chef of *L'Idiot*, having in his paper called *Monsieur la Rédacteur en chef* of *Le Diable* a godless person, the latter gentleman sends a challenge to

his calumniator. There is a good deal of—as our American cousins say—"tall-talk"; and these valiant fire-eaters sally forth, spluttering and fuming, to avenge their sullied honour. They meet, scowl like fiends at each other, then fall to like two dancing-masters. One of them is scratched or perhaps both. Their wounded honour is made whole. They weep over each other, and, adjourning to a café, swear undying friendship in deep draughts of absinthe.

There are some clever writers on the French papers, but they are outnumbered by inferior ones by twenty to one. In our own country, before a man can take a recognised position as a journalist, he must have served an apprenticeship and given some indications of ability for his work. Not so in France. The most incompetent numskull there, if he can only scrape together a few francs, starts a sheet, and calls himself a journalist. And here again the national vanity displays itself strongly; for there is a certain class of Frenchmen who would infinitely rather starve and be called journalists, than live in clover and be railway porters. The craving for social distinction amongst this Republican people is so intense, that a man will almost sell his birth-right to be able to call himself a journalist, a professor, a doctor, or an author. As any one can be a journalist in France if he has a thousand francs or so to lay out, so any one may become a "Professeur," in fact with even greater facility, for though a French Professeur may signify something, it very often signifies nothing but impudence and audacity.

When one looks at the thousands of trumpery sheets that are issued under the name of newspapers in France, and the inanities that distinguish them, the wonder is how they can possibly manage to exist. But, while many of them die in their infancy, the majority eke out a wretched existence, for a paper can be produced very cheaply indeed in the French style. Wretchedly printed on bad paper, with few or no literary expenses, these flimsy things drag on, and Monsieur le Rédacteur struts about supremely happy, because, first, his vanity is gratified, and, secondly, he can abuse somebody, and so get himself talked about. Anything like enterprise, with some notable exceptions, is a thing unknown amongst French newspapers. There is

hardly a paper that has a "private wire," and very few go in for private telegrams. If anything exciting is going on in the world, Paris newspapers are dependent upon London for the first news. I have known when two foreign telegrams in the *Daily News*, for instance, have cost more than the whole production of *Le Temps* for the day, and which, as every one knows, is one of the leading Paris papers, even if it does not stand at the head of the list. As *Le Temps* is pretty generally known by name to English people, and is a paper that Paris people are very proud of, I will take a copy of that journal for the 15th of January of this year, and contrast it with a copy of the London *Daily Telegraph* for same date. The paper on which *Le Temps* is printed is three inches longer than the *Daily Telegraph*, but half an inch narrower, and, whereas the *Telegraph* consists of eight pages, *Le Temps* consists of four. In the issue of the French journal for the date mentioned, and which I have not selected for any special reason, I find the paper made up as follows :—

Eleven and three-quarter inches in large and heavily-leaded type of a "Bulletin du Jour," which is a summary of the news of the day. This is followed by thirteen inches of "Dépêches Télégraphiques, des correspondents particuliers." These are set in smaller type, but considerably "spaced out." The longest of these telegrams is from St. Petersburg, and is dated two days previously, that is, January 13; and the greater portion of it is a transcript of a paragraph that appeared in the *Gazette Russe de Saint Petersbourg*. The next longest telegram is from Madrid, and no Spanish paper is mentioned. The third longest is from London, and it quotes in fourteen lines that Sir Samuel Baker, in a letter to the *Times*, said so and so; that the correspondent of the *Times* at Cairo says the environs of Khartoum are already in confusion (*saccagés*); and that, following the information of the *Daily News*, the evacuation of Khartoum, and destruction of the magazines, &c. In each of these items of news, the correspondent is dependent on two London papers for the information.

The *dépêches* are followed by a short column in big type and heavily leaded, of a leader on a Socialist meeting that took place at the Salle Levis, and which I refer to on

page 24. Then comes a political leader of a column in length, and in same type. We next get four and a half inches of telegrams through Havas Agency, and then three long paragraphs of China news through "des télégrammes de source Anglaise." There is a considerable extract from the *Gazette de Voss* on the Marquis Tseng. Then come three spaced-out paragraphs on Algeria and the Congo. While the bottom of that page is occupied by the indispensable *feuilleton*, consisting of six columns, seven and a quarter inches in length. Turning over, is a heavily-spaced column of "Bulletin de l'Etranger," followed by half a column of "Affaires Militaires." Then a column of news of the day, consisting in the main of an extract from *Le Cri du Peuple*. Then come three columns, big type, leaded, of a report of a workman's meeting; and at the bottom of the page six more short columns of the *feuilleton*. Turning over, there is a long column, twenty-four inches, of a political meeting, which is continued through half of the next column. We next get a short article on public prayers; then a reunion of Bonapartists; the grievance of the coachmen; two other unimportant paragraphs, and two columns of "Faits Divers," a mixed medley of little bits of odds and ends, including a report on the weather, a long letter from a correspondent on a national school of mines, two advertisements, and a quarter of a column of a law case at Marseilles, copied from the local journals of that town; while a quarter of a column is occupied by a story about the loss of some shares by a widow. The last page is made up of a list of the theatres; the said list being comprised in thirty-seven lines. The rest of the matter is vulgar and staring advertisements; a chart of the weather; a column of a report of the sitting of the Chamber; two or three short telegrams by Havas Agency, and the paper is completed. *Le Temps* is twenty-four years old, and its price in Paris is three halfpence and in the Departments twopence.

Now, taking the *Daily Telegraph* for the same date, we find in the front page eight twenty-three and a quarter inch columns of advertisements. The next page is composed of eight *twenty-five* inch columns of closely-set matter, including a little more than two columns of a report of the

"Money Market"; three-quarters of a column of "Special Market Reports," set in small, solid type. Then an Auction Summary and some paragraphs complete three columns. The following columns include a letter to the editor, reports of accidents, nearly two columns of police reports, three-quarters of a column of the trial of the men charged with a plot against the German Embassy, "Sporting Intelligence," "Official Cause List" of the Supreme Court of Judicature, a very complete "Shipping Intelligence" list, dealing with shipping in all parts of the world. Then there is a paragraph or two, a report of a "Sale of Blood Stock at Tattersall's," and the page is complete. On page three are eight more columns set in solid type. They include nearly a column of political speeches; a column and three-quarters of a special article, entitled "Our Coral Gallery"; a descriptive article of the new theatre; a notice of the Strand Theatre; a quarter-column of Popular Concerts; the movements of the Army and Navy; a quarter-column of a special telegram from Vienna, dated the previous day; a Reuter's telegram from St. Petersburg of previous day also; a paragraph telegram from "Our Correspondent at Vienna"; a long list of "Latest American Prices"; telegrams from Paris, the United States, the Suez Canal. Then come "Shipping Disasters," a weather report, and a paragraph on Portuguese annexation, and we finish with the page. Page four is made up of three and a half columns of theatre advertisements; three and a half sundry advertisements and law notices; and the remaining column is a summary and part of a leader. Page five has four and a half columns of leader matter; while a space across two columns, and nearly equal to one ordinary column, is occupied by a map of the Soudan; then there is a description of the "Mahdi's March"; sundry paragraphs; and telegrams from special correspondents at Paris, Cairo, Vienna; and several of Reuter's telegrams from Paris, Hong Kong, Berlin; and three-quarters of a closely-printed column relating to the voyage of the *Celtic*. Page six is entirely advertisements; pages seven and eight the same. These advertisements represent at a rough guess a money value of about £2,000. That is more than the cost of production of *Le Temps* for the whole week. The price of

the *Telegraph* is one penny, and its circulation 241,000 a day, while the circulation of *Le Temps* is probably 25,000 to 30,000 a day.

In selecting these two journals, I have taken what I believe to be fair representative types of English and French journalism. In fact, I think it will be admitted that *Le Temps* represents the highest type in France; but in England the *Times* must certainly be placed first; and for telegraphic news the *Telegraph* must yield to the *Daily News*.

If we take the seven leading morning papers published in London—namely, the *Times*, the *Standard*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily News*, the *Morning Advertiser*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Daily Chronicle*—they contain in their united issues more matter than all the Paris journals put together, morning and evening, and which number some scores; and their united circulation is probably greater than the united circulation of all the papers published at Paris, Lyons, Bordeaux, Macon, Marseilles, Nice, Toulon, Brest, Havre, Dijon, Amiens. I have particularly mentioned these towns because in each a great number of morning journals are published.

If we now take the *Journal des Débats*, which holds a very high place in French estimation, we shall find that it sinks into insignificance when compared with even our leading provincial papers, the *Manchester Guardian*, for instance, the *Examiner and Times*, the *Liverpool Courier*, the *Nottingham Guardian*, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Dundee Courier and Argus*, and very many others, if space would permit to enumerate them. Passing on to the Paris *Figaro*—also a leading paper—it will not compare favourably with the second rank of English provincial newspapers.

La France, *Le Voltaire*, *Le Clairon*, *Le Gaulois* are quite put into the shade, both as literary and news papers, by the *Birmingham Post* and the *Daily Gazette*, the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, and the *Western Morning News*. One might go on instituting comparisons of this kind, but enough has been said to show that the English Press ranks second to none in the world, and is infinitely superior to the French Press; while its political and social power, as

compared with that of France, is simply tremendous ; and in honesty, fearlessness, and independence it has no rival.

CHAPTER XII.

French Cooking and English Compared—French Soups—Bouillon : How it is Made—Horseflesh.

I MUST now touch upon one other charge that our good neighbours are never tired of preferring against us. They say that we cannot cook. This charge, I am aware, has been fostered and encouraged by certain writers in the English press, who, judging from the style in which they write, would seem to have gathered their knowledge of France and the French by repeated visits to "Boo-long." I here assert, emphatically, that the charge is a libel, and I will prove it.

I have heard French cooking described as "The art and science of making messes." Nothing so accurately expresses what French cooking really consists of as that phrase.

The story will be familiar to every one, of the English commercial traveller, who, having gone through thirty courses at a table d'hôte, said, "Waiter, I have tasted all the samples, you can bring me my dinner now." A true French dinner is a dinner of courses, and the courses consist of nothing in particular. A French *chef* prides himself on being able to destroy the flavour of one thing by adding the flavour of another. Take salmon, for instance; served up with *sauce Mayonnaise*. What is the predominant flavour there, if it is not the acid and the oil of the sauce? Then, did you ever try French mashed potatoes? You taste everything there but the potatoes, which are of the consistency of porridge. Spinach is dressed in a manner that causes it to resemble thick, viscid green paint; and, owing to the oil that is put in, the flavour is probably not unlike paint,—at any rate, it is not like spinach. Snails

and slugs will be served to you, and you will have to be very clever indeed to detect what they are in their disguise.

Mrs. Fred Burnaby, in her recent book on "The High Alps in Winter," tells how she and a companion were dining at a French hotel, and enjoying one of the courses very much, although they had not the remotest idea what it was composed of. Suddenly the companion dropped her knife and fork, and exclaimed, "I know what this dish is: it is slugs." And it was. Now, I think I could challenge any of my countrywomen to dress a dish of slugs or snails so that they would defy detection. Yet your French *chef* will do this. He will take a piece of diseased horse or fusty beef, and make a *ragoût* that will cause you to smack your lips and cry for more. He will so dress you a putrid fish that you shall imagine you are eating the most delicious *plat*. He will give you stewed goat so disguised that he might safely wager his head to yours that you would not tell the dish from jugged hare. He will give you tripe, and make you believe that you are eating fish; and fish, and you shall think you are partaking of game.

It must certainly be admitted that this art of disguising shows a great amount of ingenuity; it is a branch of gastronomic science that our friends across the water have made an especial study of, and in it they excel; but in plain, honest cooking we can hold our own with him. Will any impartial person, for instance, undertake to say that English soups are not superior to the much-vaunted ones of France? Our idea of a soup is, that its basis should be the essence of meat. A Frenchman's idea is, that its basis should be hot water with some fat in it, and the potentialities of that decoction in a French *chef's* hands are incredible. There are some exceptions to this: for example, in *bouille à-baisse*, which is at once delicious and deadly in its digestion-disturbing properties, and the universal *bouillon*. But what is *bouillon*? It is made from the very worst parts of beef—the scrapings and the cuttings, and what we should call "scrag"; for your French *chef* thinks it is a deadly sin to boil good beef to make soup of. If you get *bouillon* in a restaurant, you may depend upon it that in its manufacture nothing has been allowed to escape the careful and frugal eye of the *maitre* or *maitresse* that would be likely to enrich

the *bouillon* pot. So in go the pieces from the customers' plates, and when the butcher brings the joints of meat in the morning the skilful cook with his little knife shaves off all the dirty and pressed parts and pops them into his pot. They all help, and a little dirt is easily skimmed off. But, generally, the *bouillon* owes its strength to horse. The horse is a wonderful animal in the Frenchman's hands. When living, he gets every atom of work out of him it is possible to get by means of a liberal application of the whip; and when he is dead, he stews him and eats him. Most English visitors to Paris will know that there are special horse-flesh butchers; and in some parts of the town are markets for the sale of horse-flesh. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that the poor people can buy *bouillon* at from ten to forty centimes the litre. Nor are there many restaurants in Paris where the *bouillon* is not made from horse-flesh. But cheap as this *bouillon* is, it is a luxury to the French peasant, whose staple diet may be said to consist of cabbage or potato soup; a piece of coarse fish occasionally; sausages always—for, being made from horse-flesh, they are sold very cheap; now and then a piece of pork; considerable quantities of chicory-coffee; wine concocted from dried raisins and plaster of Paris; together with a tremendous proportion of coarse black bread. The consumption of bread per head—man, woman, and child—in Paris per year is 158·51 kilos.* The general unwholesomeness of a French peasant's diet, his horror of fresh air, and his habitual dirtiness, account for his stunted physique and blanched appearance; and in no way will he compare with the English peasant. An English peasant aims at getting good food, but, his French *confrère* cares not what he eats so long as it does not cost much; for so great is his greed for gain, that he will haggle about a centime, and starve for two days in the week to save a sou. But, returning to the subject of cooking—Did you, my good reader, ever get green peas cooked properly in France? Are they not generally given to you clogged together in a mass, and swimming in rank butter? Then, as for a potato. I will defy a French man or woman

* *Statistique Alimentaire*, page 420.

to cook it in any other way than by frying it. I will undertake to go into Westmoreland or Yorkshire, Lancashire or Devonshire, Hampshire or Wiltshire, and the first respectable mechanic's wife I meet shall be a better cook than the same class of woman in France. Where is the French-woman, whatever her station, who can make bread, good pastry, wholesome puddings? who can stuff and roast a fowl, cook a pheasant or partridge, roast a leg of mutton or joint of beef? who can stew a rabbit, make a pease-pudding, an Irish stew? who can make a jelly, stew eels, boil a cod's head? who can make jam, a hot cake, mutton broth, a haricot? who can jug a hare, pot shrimps, or pot beef? who can make a meat-pie or a mutton-hash with toast in it? who can cook a chop, grid a steak, or mash potatoes? Yet all these things, and a score more, the most ordinary Englishwoman is capable of doing, and doing well. The women of France are, as a rule, wretched cooks; and amongst the poorer classes the aim seems to be to get things as strong of garlic and as greasy as possible. Go amongst the navvies who work on the roads, the market-women, the porters, and people of similar standing, and examine their food as they take it at their meal-times; then look at the food eaten by the same class in England, and unless you are blind and a confirmed bigot, you will confess that England has the advantage by a long way. To say that English people cannot cook is the veriest cant; and you have only to live in France long enough to know how untruthful the statement is that the French peasantry can cook better than the same class in England. The "art and science of making messes" flourishes in France, and I am prepared to give the French all due credit for the marvellous ingenuity they display; but I object to Monsieur coming to us for a few weeks, and then going back to his country, and proclaiming that the English eternally live off "ros-bif" and mutton-chops.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Frenchman in London—His Cat-like Love for his Haunts—His Dislike to Travel—Paris Municipal Council and the Hospitals—Social Life—How Children are brought up—The *Dot*—French Courting—The Treatment of Infants—The general Unhealthiness of French Children—Illegitimacy—French Theatres—The English Flag and Liberty.

IF the French stranger within our gates could, by any possible means, be induced to leave Rupert-street, Wardour-street, and the other precincts of Leicester-square, and take a walk west, north, south, or east of the metropolis, how his mind would be expanded ! Frenchmen have been known to find their way to the neighbourhood of the docks ; and M. Hector France is believed by his countrymen to have been in Wapping ; and if a Frenchman can only tear himself away from the seductions of Leicester-square and the Alhambra,—if he can only muster up energy and courage enough, he struggles into a bus and goes off to the purlieu of the docks, and then what a marvellous story he gives to his country of the hideous types of English faces he has seen, and of the awful brutality of the Saxon ! That these English faces are not English faces at all doesn't matter to him. That there are a few hundred thousand or so of foreigners is not of the slightest consequence. He has seen them in the neighbourhood of the docks in London, and that is quite enough. It is no business of his to discriminate. When he flees from his country and comes to England for protection, he is perfectly well aware that he is coming amongst brutal Saxons, and with him, it is a creed that the Saxon is a fiend incarnate. So he hies him away to the docks, and comes back to Leicester-square, and believes that he knows London intimately, and has seen the most expressive types of the English people. It never enters into his head that the neighbourhood of the docks in that most unholy of cities, Marseilles, is infinitely worse than anything we have got to show : for there, every evil and every sin that human nature is capable of is committed hourly ; while for devilish, hideous, repulsive humanity it cannot be surpassed. We need not mention Toulon,

Bordeaux, Brest, Havre : it is too well-known what they are.

Now, if our guest would try for once to leave the docks alone, and walk down that unique road that leads to Bow he might benefit in mind and body. And if he turned his steps north and went on to Highgate, Hampstead Heath, Primrose-hill, he might, if he were susceptible, begin to feel the beauty of London growing upon him. And then, if he would only steadily pursue his course into Oxford-street, and, bearing west all the time, give a glance round the truly grand neighbourhood of Hyde-park, and if he were not too fatigued he might stroll through the Park and get into Piccadilly, and, still steering west, peep in at Kensington-gardens, looking at the Albert Hall and monument *en route*. Then let him turn down the Cromwell-road, and when he gets to the bottom and gazes round on the unsurpassed grandeur which will meet him at every turn, he will, if he be an honest man, confess that London is not such a bad place after all. If he were a traveller, which unfortunately few Frenchmen are, I would beg of him to spend a few hours exploring Bayswater, and coming down past Holland Park and House, go south to Chelsea, and crossing the river just peep in at Battersea-park. He might go on to Wandsworth, and, crossing the Common, get to Clapham Common ; learn something of the neighbourhood of Balham, and Streatham, and Clapham-park ; and he might do worse than extend his walk to Peckham Rye and the locality of Nunhead. At any rate, if he carried out this little programme, I'll warrant me that, an' he be an honest man, he will, as he sits down in his squalid café or lodging in Leicester-square, or its vicinity, to write an account of London for his Paris paper, that he will write with a less jaundiced view than he does now. Were it not too much to expect any Frenchman to travel so far from his haunts—for there is a good deal of the cat's nature in your Frenchman, and he hates to get far from the house where he lives—I should ask our next guest who is troubled with the *cacoethes scribendi*, to endeavour to get up the river and explore some of its exquisite bits ; and, above all, I would pray him to wander studiously and thoughtfully through Richmond-park, and to see that view from Richmond-hill

which has set poets and painters raving—and they not always of the brutal Saxon race either. And if he could—oh ! if he only *could* be induced to slip into Kew Gardens, and after that make his way to the railway station and proceed to Windsor ! And, when he had rested himself thoroughly, after this tremendous exertion, could he do better than learn something of Burnham Beeches ? Or he might even go to Leatherhead and Maidenhead, and getting on to Holmwood Common run up to the top of Leith Hill, and if our eternal fogs would only allow of it, gaze on the panorama that is there unfolded. Then by all means he should come back to the little old-time, chalky town of Dorking, and hire—if he has money enough—a conveyance to take him to the top of Box-hill. When he descends and has partaken of some slight refreshment at the exquisite little ivy-coloured hostelry near the bridge at the foot of the hill, he can return to London. On another day I would like him to get as far as Weybridge, and glance round there, and then tramp over to Godalming. Or if he would venture among the brutal population of the far east, he might explore the sylvan beauties of Epping Forest and Chingford, and even go as far as Rye House. Then there are Norwood and Beckenham in the south, Harrow in the north, in fact, scores of places all in the suburbs of our much-maligned metropolis, that if we could only induce our dear friends to visit, we might hear a little less of the brutal Saxons, and more of beautiful London. But, unfortunately for us, London, as known to our French guests, is comprised within a radius of half a mile from Leicester-square. It is regrettable that this should be so ; but what can we do ? You may take a horse to the water, but you cannot compel him to drink. Nor can we compel our Gallic visitors to see what they don't want to see. I began by explaining the nature of the disease—Anglophobia—from which all Frenchmen suffer more or less. And so far as my experience goes—by no means inconsiderable—I am strongly inclined to think that the disease is perfectly incurable. We must, therefore, try and endure through it all as best we may.

In conclusion, I must make a few remarks upon the position of France as it is understood by all thoughtful men at

the present day. She is a declining nation, and will continue to decline until she gets a stable and honest Government, who have the welfare of their country more at heart than the welfare of themselves and the filling of their pockets out of the taxpayers' money. I have already quoted the Paris *Figaro* on this very subject, and here is another passage from the same paper :—

"Instead of reducing the salaries of bishops from £2,000 to £600 a year, the Chamber of Deputies might with advantage turn their attention to official jobbery."

This jobbery and speculation is a glaring and crying disgrace. It corrupts the army, it corrupts the navy, it corrupts the State, it corrupts the people. And then again, how is it possible for a country to flourish and prosper when its people are eternally pulling down and altering the institutions upon which a nation's greatness depends? What can be said of a people, for instance, that can be guilty of the following imbecility :—

The Paris Municipal Council is composed for the most part of Anarchists, and these would-be destroyers of everything are going to change the names of five hospitals in Paris, which bear the names of L'Hôtel Dieu, La Pitié, La Charité, St. Antoine, and St. Louis. These are all to be rechristened because they "perpetuate the memory of certain religious beliefs against which we have declared ourselves, and shall do so again." And so this precious Council is going to take away the beautiful and sentimental names, and substitute them by "La Solidarité," "Ambroise Saré," "Les Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen," "Boerhaave," and "Velpeaux." What a change! Fancy any one having to say in reference to a patient, "Take him to the hospital of *les Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*." If it were not so pitiable, it would be ridiculous. If the worst enemy of France had wished to hold her up to public scorn and ridicule, they could not have invented anything that would have done it better than what I have quoted. It is not an invention, however, but an absolute truth. Then, instead of squandering such enormous sums of money in jobbery, would it not be more becoming if they spent some of it in improving the ignorance of the people? But notwithstanding that the swollen budget for the present year is enormous,

an official announcement just published states that the sums granted by the French Government for the purchase of books, manuscripts, medals, and seals by the great public libraries during the present year is altogether 321,500 francs, divided as follows :—Bibliothèque Nationale, 181,200 francs ; Bibliothèque Mazarine, 9,500 francs ; Bibliothèque Ste. Gèneviève, 16,000 francs ; and Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 15,000 francs. The French papers complain that the total sum is less than that granted in London to the British Museum alone.

If we look at French social life, and examine it in all its details, we find it as hollow and as full of shams as it can possibly be. From an early age the dark superstitions of an exacting creed are instilled into the children ; and from the time the children have their "first communion" to their dying day, unless they become renegades, they are bound slaves to a worship that is imposing in its ceremony but without true devotion.

In their domestic lives there is an absence of regard for those observances that people of less prurient minds hold dear. Long before a boy is out of his teens he is allowed full licence ; and, if the family is well off, it is a moral certainty that long before the lad is twenty he will have ruined his health, and have passed through a career which we in our Saxon brutality should be disposed to stamp with the word disgraceful, if not infamous. I am aware that amongst ourselves we have plenty of this sort of thing, quite enough to make us blush ; and I believe we do blush, and sometimes weep. But with us it is rather the exception. In France it is quite a recognised thing ; and a young man is not supposed to have graduated unless he can show a diploma for intrigue. So fully is this sort of thing understood and recognised throughout France, that daughters are watched and guarded in a manner that, though necessary, perhaps, while society is what it is in France, is, when taken with other things, incongruous and absurd. For instance, no restriction whatever is put upon the literature that may come into a girl's hands, nor the number of immoral plays she may witness at a theatre. And any one who has the slightest pretensions to a knowledge of France, knows perfectly well that both French

literature and the French drama are corrupted and defiled with beastliness. A most eminent authority,* speaking of French literature, says :—"In the whirlpool of the literature of the day, I have been dragged into the bottomless abyss of horrors of French romance-literature. I will say in one word—it is a literature of despair. In order to produce a momentary effect, the very contrary of all that should be held up to man for his safety or his comfort is brought before the reader, who at last knows not whither to fly or how to save himself. To push the hideous, the revolting, the cruel, the base, in short the whole brood of the vile and abandoned to impossibility, is their Satanic task. One may, and must, say task ; for there is at the bottom a profound study of old times, by bygone events and circumstances, remarkable and intricate plots, and incredible facts, so that it is impossible to call such a work either empty or bad. And this task even men of remarkable talents have undertaken ; clever, eminent men, men of middle age, who feel themselves condemned henceforward to occupy themselves with these abominations. . . . Everything true—everything æsthetical is gradually and necessarily excluded from this literature."

But though the girl's mind is allowed to be thus contaminated—though of course, French people do not think that it is contamination,—an iron hand is kept over her personal movements. During her school-days, she is watched with hawk-eyed vigilance. When she is old enough to "be brought out," the parents set to work to get her married. She is taken to balls, concerts, parties, reunions, but always under guard, and not for five minutes at a time is she allowed the slightest liberty. She is on sale, and her value, including her *dot*, is worth so much. If a young man wishes to purchase her, he gets his mother or his father, or some other relation or friend to go to her parents, who are informed of his wishes, and the amount of money he has. That he may be a *roué* is of no consequence, so long as the money is there. When the engagement has been arranged, the young man and woman are allowed to meet, but never by any possible chance alone. Some near

* Goethe. *Correspondence with Zelter.*

relation of the girl's is always with her. The *fiancé* is not allowed for some time to do more than to shake her hand, though, later, permission is given to him to embrace her on meeting and on parting. All his letters to her are opened first by her guardians, and hers to him have to pass the censorship of the said guardian before they are dispatched. If the engaged couple walk out, following behind the girl, like her shadow, stalks her mother, sister, aunt, cousin, as the case may be. And so, until the moment that the marriage ceremony has made them one, the young woman is never once left alone with her future husband.

Now, whence springs this suspicion, if it is not from a knowledge of the too real danger? It is the old story of the thief watching the thief. The results of this pernicious system of restricting all liberty is seen in the awful domestic misery throughout France, and the total disregard of the seventh commandment.

As soon as ever the young wife has shaken off the shackles of parental bondage, she abandons herself to her newly-acquired freedom. For the first few months, if the husband and wife do not mutually agree to separate before then, there is much visiting and receiving of visitors; and a ball or a theatre every night is inevitable. The bride, especially if she be good-looking, is the object of the most fulsome flattery and odious attentions on the part of the young men who swarm round her like bees round sugar. From this swarm she soon selects her lover. When she becomes a mother, the maternal instincts would appear to be peculiarly evanescent, or, rather, they are crushed out by the national vanity and a slavish observance of a cruel and ridiculous custom. No Frenchwoman of the slightest social standing would think of suckling her child. That would be an outrage against all conventional laws. The result is, the child is either sent away to a wet nurse or a nurse is hired for the house. But in either case, the mother for the first few months seldom sees her infant. During this time the poor little mite is kept swathed in bandages exactly like an Egyptian mummy, and under no circumstances are the limbs allowed to have any play, for in the French mind is a rooted conviction that if a baby is

allowed to move its legs and arms they will not grow straight.

When the child is taken out, it is doubly swathed, and, in addition, it will be wrapped in flannel, and over that again will be put an enormous robe of cashmere or satin, according to the wealth of the parents; and in their vanity and love of show, the parents will lavish enormous sums of money on this one article of dress. Then the baby's face is closely muffled up in a thick veil, and over his head an umbrella is held, and in this state he is paraded up and down, a mere vehicle for the display of the grand robe. If any one doubts the evil effect of this sort of thing on the national health, one has only to look at the chalky-faced, weakly children throughout France. There is no robustness, no vigour, no healthy life.

I find that in 1880 the marriages in France were only 7.9 per 1,000 inhabitants, while the births were 26.4 per 1,000 and the deaths 21.4 per 1,000.* These figures are so suggestive as to need no comment from me. But I would ask the reader to contrast the low percentage of marriages with the high percentage of births. The same authority gives for that year the percentage of illegitimacy as 7.41 per 100 inhabitants! the total number of illegitimate births for the total population of 37,314,660 being 68,227 during the year.

With reference to the population of France, I may quote some interesting statistics that have recently been issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, the object of them being to obtain an approximate estimate as to whether the total number of inhabitants in France will be greater or less at the close of the century than it is now. The figures so far worked out tend to prove that there is likely to be a decrease in the population, for though from 1806, when the total population was 29,107,425, to 1872 there was an annual increase of 38 per 10,000 inhabitants, that increase has since dropped to 26 per 10,000. There is reason to believe that the rate of increase is still further declining,

* *Annuaire de l'Economie Politique*, page 3.

and that there are not upon the average more than two children to each family. The returns also state that out of every 100 inhabitants of Paris only 36 are born in the department, 57 coming from the provinces, and seven from abroad. Moreover, while the number of births remains nearly stationary in France, the rate of infant mortality is enormous, being as much as 27 per cent. in Normandy, and 15 per cent. for the whole of France.

Let the reader particularly note in these statistics, that the infant mortality for the whole of France reaches the high figure of 15 per cent. Thoughtful Frenchmen would do well to ponder on this alarming destruction of the young of the country. But who that knows anything about the infant life of France will be surprised? As soon as ever a baby comes into the world, it is dosed with strong and drastic purges; then it is immediately swathed up in bandages exactly like a mummy, and for the first year of its life it is very seldom properly washed, for French nurses and mothers have a perfect dread of water touching their children.

Then, as I have already described, mothers in France do not, as a rule, suckle their own children. The bourgeois class look upon this maternal operation as undignified; besides, a French woman is too fond of gaiety and pleasure to yield readily to the trammels that a baby imposes, so the child is delivered up to a stranger. Its mother, when she can spare the time, looks in on it occasionally. Descending in the scale to the peasantry, the women, for the most part being the hewers of wood and drawers of water, cannot give the slightest attention to their children, and so they are sent away to women who make a living by taking care of infants. Here, amongst the most appalling dirt, squalor, and misery, the child passes the first year or so of its life, and if it happens to survive the ordeal, it is a stunted, rickety, miserable creature.

It surely needs no further evidence than this to account for the fact that the average duration of life in France is much lower than it is in England. But if other evidence were necessary, it might be found in the dirty and lazy habits of the people. Personal cleanliness is a thing they

care very little about, and they dread ventilation. Then again, the enormous quantities of absinthe and other filthy decoctions that are consumed must tend to sap vitality; while the love of outdoor sports, which is so characteristic of the British, does not exist amongst our neighbours. A Frenchman prefers to pass his spare hours in a foetid billiard-room, a reeking café, or in a cramped-up bowling-alley; but he shrinks from manly and healthy outdoor sports as he would shrink from the pest.

The evil of this dislike for exercise manifests itself very conspicuously in the women. A French woman is the very incarnation of laziness and slovenliness. The one ruling thought of her life is dress. She cannot walk, or, if she can, she won't, and she does *not* believe that cleanliness is next to godliness.

By the time French women are twenty-four or twenty-five they are as old and not half as active as the generality of our women of thirty to thirty-five. They are burdened with an excess of fat, and are almost invariably as yellow as saffron. The fat is due to want of exercise, and to the immense quantities of saccharine matter a French woman eats, for she is never happy unless she is drinking *eau sucrée*, syrups, or munching bon-bons. The yellowness is the result of the want of fresh air and liberal use of soap and water.

But there is one thing which a Frenchwoman excels in, and that is the *making of a complexion*. The brilliant fresh complexions that one sees on the Boulevards and in the Bois are the skilful productions of art. Cosmetics, bloom, rouge, pearl, and a hundred and one other elaborate preparations are indispensable to a Frenchwoman's toilet-table; and if nature has failed to give her a good figure—and not one woman in France out of every five *has* a good figure—she relies upon her dressmaker to supply the want, and by means of false bust, false stomach, false hips, shoulder-pads, quiltings, and other artful devices, she is turned out faultless to all appearances. This art of making up the figure—an art which men do not hesitate to avail themselves of—is one that is peculiarly French; and it

would be unjust and ungenerous not to frankly admit that our neighbours are perfect in it.

The purpose of this little work would scarcely be fulfilled if some passing reference was not made to French theatres. I am aware that the subject is one upon which tomes have been written, and it would take many more tomes yet to exhaust it. It is therefore almost audacious to attempt to criticise the stage in France in a few words; but I feel impelled by a sense of duty to enter a strong protest against the cant that is talked in England about French acting and French plays.

This cant seems to have become almost a fashion amongst a certain class of people in our own country, who, in their ignorance of France and the French, think it is "good form" to exclaim, "Ah! you must go to Paris if you want to see this sort of thing done properly." The people who talk thus are generally those who are the least qualified to express an opinion. As a matter of fact, the Italians are infinitely superior to the French as actors, and so jealous are the French of their rivals in this matter that there has recently been a dead set against everything Italian; and the Italian Opera in Paris has ceased to exist, on the plea that "French people are incapable of appreciating Italian music." Of course they are, and for the very substantial reason that Italian music and Italian acting are above them. If one compares the two lyrical and representative theatres, the Grand Opera in Paris and La Scala at Milan, the former sinks into utter insignificance. At La Scala one witnesses the very perfection of art, in Paris only a tawdry imitation.

The French, in their vanity for outward show, have erected a magnificent temple of the Drama in their Grand Opera-House; but I venture to assert that its magnificence is all in its gilt and decorations, for a worse-ventilated and more uncomfortable house of its kind does not exist, while the way in which the theatre is managed would disgrace a body of schoolboys. One never knows until a few hours beforehand what is going to be performed, and the performances, generally speaking, are beneath contempt, considering the pretensions that are made.

Then as regards the much-vaunted *Comédie Française*—is not our own Lyceum, under Mr. Irving's management, its equal in every respect? have we not something to be proud of when we remember the glorious career of the tiny Prince of Wales's under the Bancrofts? and where in Paris at the present day can we find the equals of the Haymarket, the Court, the St. James's, the Prince's, the Princess's, the Savoy?

While the Gaiety, Drury Lane, the Adelphi, the Vaudeville, the Strand, the Grand, may challenge the whole of France to rival them. In my humble judgment there is not a single Paris theatre that has not its equal in London. And though it was long a fashion for English managers to go to France for their dramatic wares, a reaction is setting in, and the last few years have proved that we have native talent amongst us which is capable of turning out infinitely better stuff, purer, healthier, and higher in tone, than anything our neighbours can send us.

In conclusion, I must once more make reference to the Anglophobic criticisms to which we have so long been subjected at the hands of our good friends. We are told that we are gloomy, melancholy hypocrites, and even an English writer* has caught up this cant, and echoed it. He speaks of our having "peopled one whole continent with our lank-jawed kinsmen, and fringed another with the careworn faces of our sons. A full half of the globe's surface is given over to the melancholy Englishman—with his sombre attire, his repellant manners, his gloomy worship, his mechanic habits of toil."

This is cant of a very silly type. In what way is the Englishman more melancholy than any other civilised race? It has been said and sung that our peasantry are the happiest in the world; and those who know the Italian and French peasantry will certainly not venture to assert that ours are inferior to them. English worship may be gloomy, and in my opinion is so; but it is at

* H. D. Traill.

least free from the horrible superstitions of the Romish Church.

And then as to our "mechanic habitudes of toil." Why it is these very mechanic habitudes that have made us the mighty people that we are, and that place us in the van of all other nations ; and as there is no effect without a cause, it would seem, arguing from the foregoing premises, that these very characteristics which are so condemned are what have enabled us to spread ourselves over the face of the globe. How is it the French have not been able to do this ? How is it the French cannot colonise ? How is it the French cannot civilise savage peoples as we can do ? They must be wanting in something which we possess. What is that something, if it is not the mechanic habitudes of toil ? We succeed where the French fail. Why ? The French are just as ambitious of spreading themselves all over the globe as we have been, but they have not been able to accomplish it.

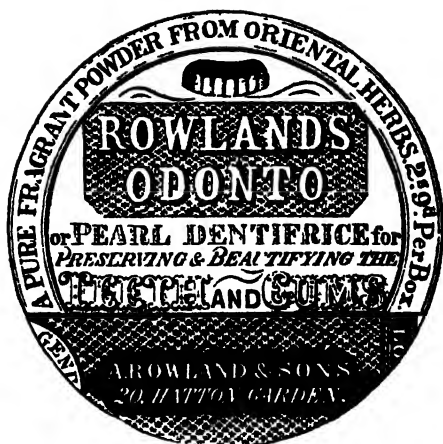
And since our kinsmen on the other side of the Atlantic have built up a mighty nation, and our kinsmen at the Antipode. are following in their wake, it would seem as if the gloom and the melancholy, the sombre attire, and the mechanic habitudes of toil, are the indispensable conditions to becoming powerful and great. It has been my lot to travel over a great part of the world, and it has never yet struck me that Englishmen or their kinsmen in America were more gloomy or more melancholy than other races of people.

If they take life more seriously, it is because they have a higher regard for the serious duties that life imposes ; but I am strongly of opinion that "an Englishman gets quite as much enjoyment out of life as a native of any other civilised country. At any rate, if our French friends would only try to view us from an unprejudiced stand-point, they might find that we are not quite so bad as they represent us to be. Even if their criticisms were conceived in a spirit of truth and fairness, they would carry weight ; but they are so manifestly the outcome of malignant jealousy, so unfriendly in their tone, and so bitter

in their denunciations, that we may well afford to treat them with indifference.

As in the past we have lived through French jealousy and envy, so shall we in the future ; and while France is seething with internal passions, while her power as a nation is waning and growing weaker day by day, we, gloomy, melancholy hypocrites, will steadily pursue our way, and the English tongue will continue to spread, while the Flag that is the symbol of Freedom, Truth, and Honour, shall float on the winds in the remotest corners of the earth, carrying with it just laws and morality to countless millions of the great human family

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